

2023 THE ESSENTIAL PREVIEW!
PETER GABRIEL | THE CURE | BLONDIE



UNCUT

**EXCLUSIVE
NEW INTERVIEW!**

*"It's my life...
it's what I do"*

**NEIL
YOUNG**

**ON HARVEST,
CRAZY HORSE
AND... THE FUTURE!**

**127
REVIEWS!**

**THE
STOOGES**
"UNSOUND!"

MARGO PRICE
"I OWE A LOT TO
PSYCHEDELICS"

THE METERS
NEW ORLEANS STRUT

JOHN CALE
OH, MERCY!

GONG
MAGICK MOMENTS

NEW ORDER
"HIT IT WITH
HAMMERS!"

REMEMBERED

**LAWRENCE
CYMANDE
MEG BAIRD
GAYE SU AKYOL
MIKE SCOTT**

**MIMI PARKER
KEITH LEVENE
NIK TURNER
WILKO JOHNSON**

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#7InchSinglesBox



On the cover:
Neil Young by
Henry Diltz

IN this month's review of John Cale's new album, *Mercy*, Tom Pinnock makes a good point about the creatively successful third acts enjoyed by many veteran *Uncut* favourites. Musicians, in other words, who are still making vital and exciting music that fulfils their early artistic promise. Celebrating the evolving stories of artists like Cale is, of course, a critical part of what we do here. We've been following the capricious career swerves of this month's cover star for *Uncut*'s entire lifetime – and, as ever, Neil Young doesn't disappoint this month, as he looks back on a characteristically busy 2022 that included a new album with Crazy Horse, a legendary unreleased record from the vaults and a 50th-anniversary release for one of his most beloved classics. I'd go so far as to claim it's one of the best interviews we've ever run with Neil – stand up, Damien Love – and covers a lot of ground with the kind of depth and focus Young often isn't always inclined towards. After some comedy gold at the start, involving Neil and modern technology, Damien soon digs into one of the most intriguing aspects of Young's career.

Writes Damien, "You have to wonder whether juggling so many eras at once, and so many sometimes contradictory versions of Neil Young, he ever finds things blurring together – if echoes from his busy past can sometimes slip through to influence his present."

"It doesn't really work like that, I don't think," Young replies. "I got a lot of stuff to clean up. I've got a big mess that I left behind. I've created a lot of unfinished records, unfinished this and that. I now have the time to deal with it, focus on it. But at the same time, anything new takes precedent. Always. Once I start thinking about something new, I drop the old stuff right away and do the new thing."

It's a great way to bring to a close a huge year for *Uncut*. We celebrated our 300th issue (and our 25th birthday) in the spring – milestones for any magazine, especially during these challenging times. So on behalf of myself, John, Marc, Tom, Sam, Mick, Mike, Michael, Phil, Johnny, Lora and Mark, sincere thanks for all your support over the past 12 months. As you'd imagine, we have lots of big plans lined up for 2023 – including a legendary artist making their debut as a cover star next month – and we hope you'll come along for the ride.

In the meantime, have a peaceful Christmas and New Year. See you in January!

Michael Bonner, Editor. Follow me on Twitter @michaelbonner

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CHRISTMAS
OFFER!



INSTANT KARMA!

THIS MONTH'S REVELATIONS FROM THE WORLD OF UNCUT
FEATURING... Ivor Cutler | Complete Mountain Almanac | Harvey Mandel

“He was free, anarchistic”

KEITH LEVENE | 1957–2022

Jah Wobble remembers inventing the sound of the future with his “mercurial” friend, **Keith Levene**



“I FIRST met Keith at the Warwick Road squats, which even by the druggy standards of the day were pretty

hardcore. It was late '75 or '76, so I was 17 or 18 and he would have still been a teenager, maybe 19. He had charisma and a great sense of humour, very intelligent. He was a Jewish guy from North London, privately educated, and I was coming out the East End, but he was more than happy to deal with me. There was lots of mad energy, we were probably both

speeding. But we became friends.

“At the time, everyone in the squats was doing the same archetypal punk thing, imitating the Ramones. I wasn't bothered about punk music – I wanted to merge Tangerine Dream with heavy dub bass, and Keith was very enthusiastic about that idea, so we hit it off. We saw music in the same way. We were on fire in each other's company.

“Keith had quite a wide palette. He was into progressive rock and I found out years later he'd worked with

Steve Howe. But Keith didn't tell me a lot of stuff. He was a very tricky individual in some respects – crafty. Sometimes these mercurial, talented people don't see fit to tell you everything. He was a smart guy and he stood out for his smartness.

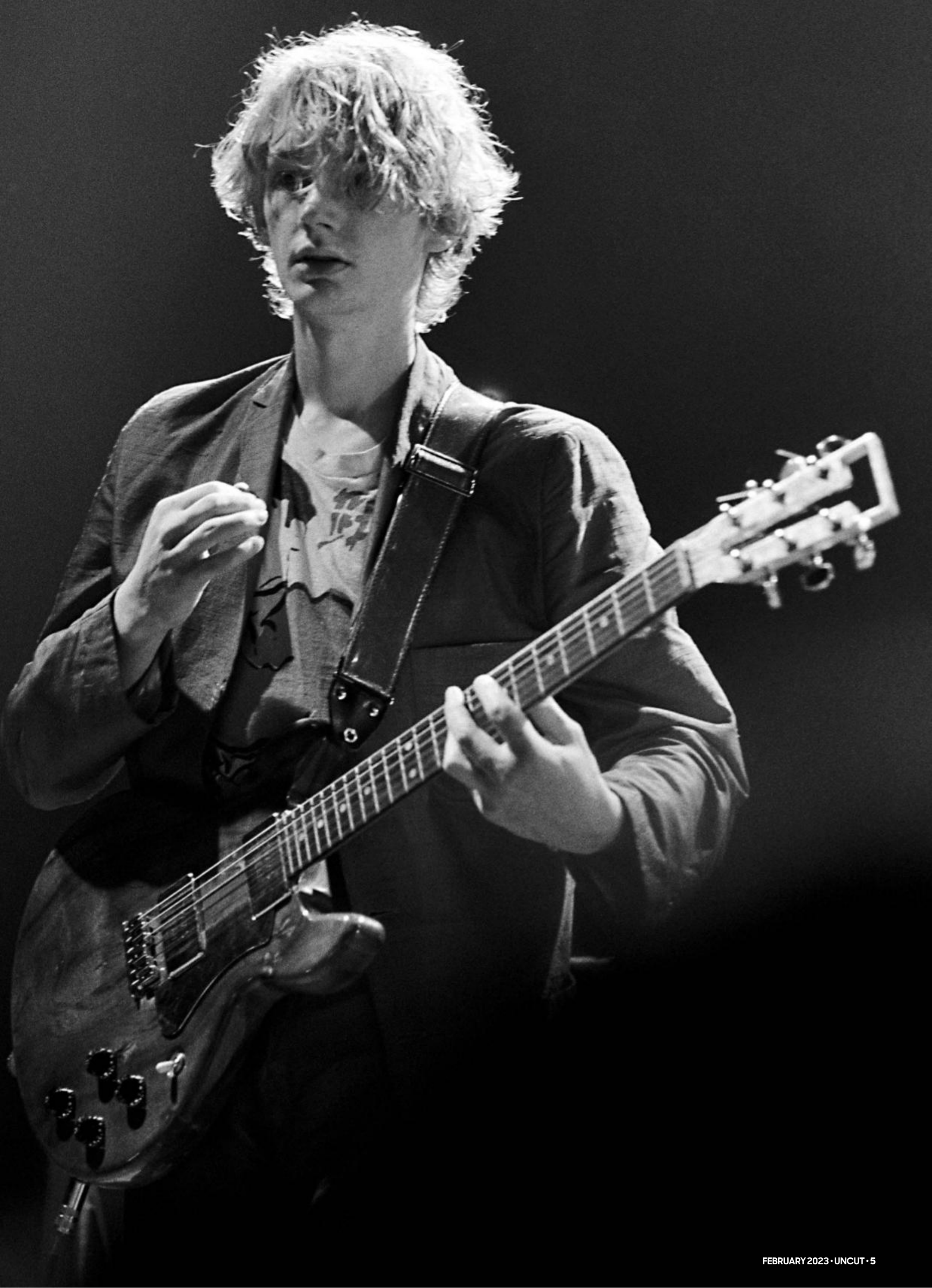
“[In January 1978] I saw the news on the front page of the *Mirror* that the Pistols had split in San Francisco. Not long after that, John [Lydon] was on the blower: ‘D’you wanna join a new band?’ Who's in it? Keith? Fucking blinding! Quite quickly, I

“Every time you put me and Keith in a room, it'd be nuclear fusion”

PiL in 1978:
(l-r) Levene,
Wobble, Lydon



At the Agora
Ballroom,
Atlanta,
Georgia,
April 24, 1980



INSTANT KARMA

"A very tricky individual": 1980

realised he was taking heroin and I knew it would lead to trouble. But at that point I was just like, 'Fucking hell, this'll be great.'

"Writing with Keith was so easy, so quick, as it is when you have chemistry with somebody. We were on the same wavelength immediately. The first proper bassline I've come up with is 'Public Image'. Keith kind of played across it with this gorgeous part. Straight away, fucking bingo. The same with 'Poptones', he's floating over the top of it. He had a brilliant sense of harmonics. It's sophisticated in its own way: it's not major, it's not minor. It's like a painter – he mixes the fucking paints, he doesn't just paint everything dark blue.

"I knew his worth, but a lot of people didn't. People liked the first [PiL] single, but the rest of it, they fucking hated.

Stinking reviews. So let's get it straight, it wasn't like it was a huge success. But when I worked with The Edge in '83, he'd obviously been informed by Keith, as had a lot of guitarists.

"About 2010, he got back in contact and convinced me he was clean. But he's a great seducer, Keith – he would have been a great salesman. Anyway, I got a rehearsal together thinking maybe we'll go out and do the *Metal Box* stuff. He comes in the room and starts playing that phased flanging sound, and I can see Clive Bell and a couple of the other



"An infectious laugh": Levene in 2007

musicians with their mouths open. Number one, he's not playing with a pick, he's using his fingers. And there are no effects on it. I was like, 'Fuckin' 'ell, he's still got that sound.' Not everything can be explained, that's the beauty of art!

"But we started working together again and we'd encounter the same issues as we did in the past. We did

half a dozen shows that were fucking good and then he got difficult, giving the crew a hard time and worrying me that he'd not turn up to shows. I couldn't get into a situation where some promoter wants to sue me



because Keith isn't at a gig. We made a decent record as well [2012's *Yin & Yang*] and we had a good laugh together, but it would darken.

"I'd addiction issues as well, it wasn't just him. The only difference is, I cleaned up. So I can't look down my nose at him as some horrible junkie. I'm just angry that he didn't get in recovery and stop all that.

"The secret [to his musical approach] was that Keith didn't really care what happened next. He was free, anarchistic. He didn't give a fuck, you know? Which is great, but when you're broken and you're fucked, you *do* have to care. I'd say, 'Your guitar's influenced a lot of people, so why the fuck can't you start to get it together and keep yourself clean? Because you've got so much to offer.' And at that point he'd say something smartarse to me and really annoy me, so I'd put the phone down! But it doesn't matter that I was disappointed in him at times. The main thing is that what we did at that time [in PiL] reverberates to this day.

"He's done all these wacky things, as marginal characters often do. In 2012, he appeared at the airport without shoes. The tour manager told him he probably wouldn't get through security, so he bought a huge white pair of baseball boots and took the laces out. But I'll tell you what I remember most: his laugh. He was a mean-spirited, sour character a lot of the time, to some people, but he also had a lovely infectious laugh. And I remember feeling a closeness with him, when it was just me and him. Every time you put me and Keith in a room, it'd be nuclear fusion." **© SAM RICHARDS**

HIS OWN CREATION

Three essential Keith Levene tracks



PUBLIC IMAGE LIMITED
"THEME"
(from *Public Image/First Issue*, 1978)

"Public Image" was the clarion call to the post-punk revolution, but the first track of PiL's debut album was the full Levene manifesto: nine minutes of viciously beautiful futuristic guitar assault, like endless sheets of glass smashing on a concrete floor. The Edge, Thurston Moore, Kevin Shields and pretty much every alt.rock guitarist you care to name was taking notes.



PUBLIC IMAGE LIMITED **"POPTONES"**

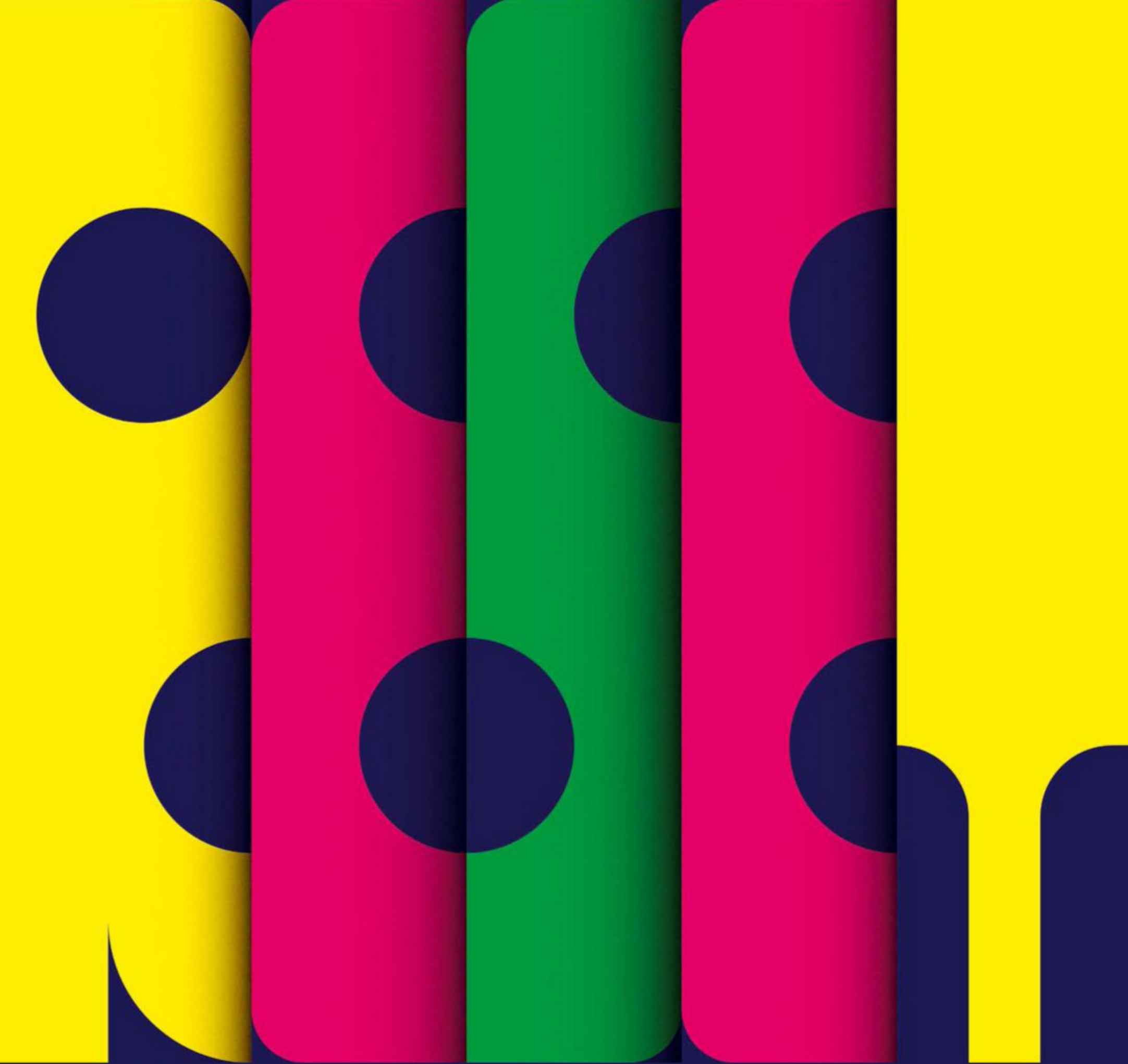
(from *Metal Box*, 1979)

PiL's finest and most disturbing moment, Levene wrapping barbed-wire guitars around Jah Wobble's momentous bassline. He also ejected the original drummer and played the psychotically lurching rhythm himself. "When you're both in dysfunctional worlds and you find this moment of absolute clarity, you're out of time and space," says Wobble of the song's creation. "It's so vivid, it's like looking at the fucking sun."



KEITH LEVENE
"IF SIX WAS NINE"
(from *Violent Opposition*, 1988)

Levene's post-PiL discography is tragically slim, but before disappearing from the scene for the best part of two decades, he did release two intriguing solo EPs. This Hendrix cover starts off faithfully – with vocals by Fishbone's John Norwood Fisher – before being gradually consumed by Levene's uniquely disorientating psychedelic guitar slashes. Jimi would surely have approved.



PANDA BEAR SONIC BOOM RESET

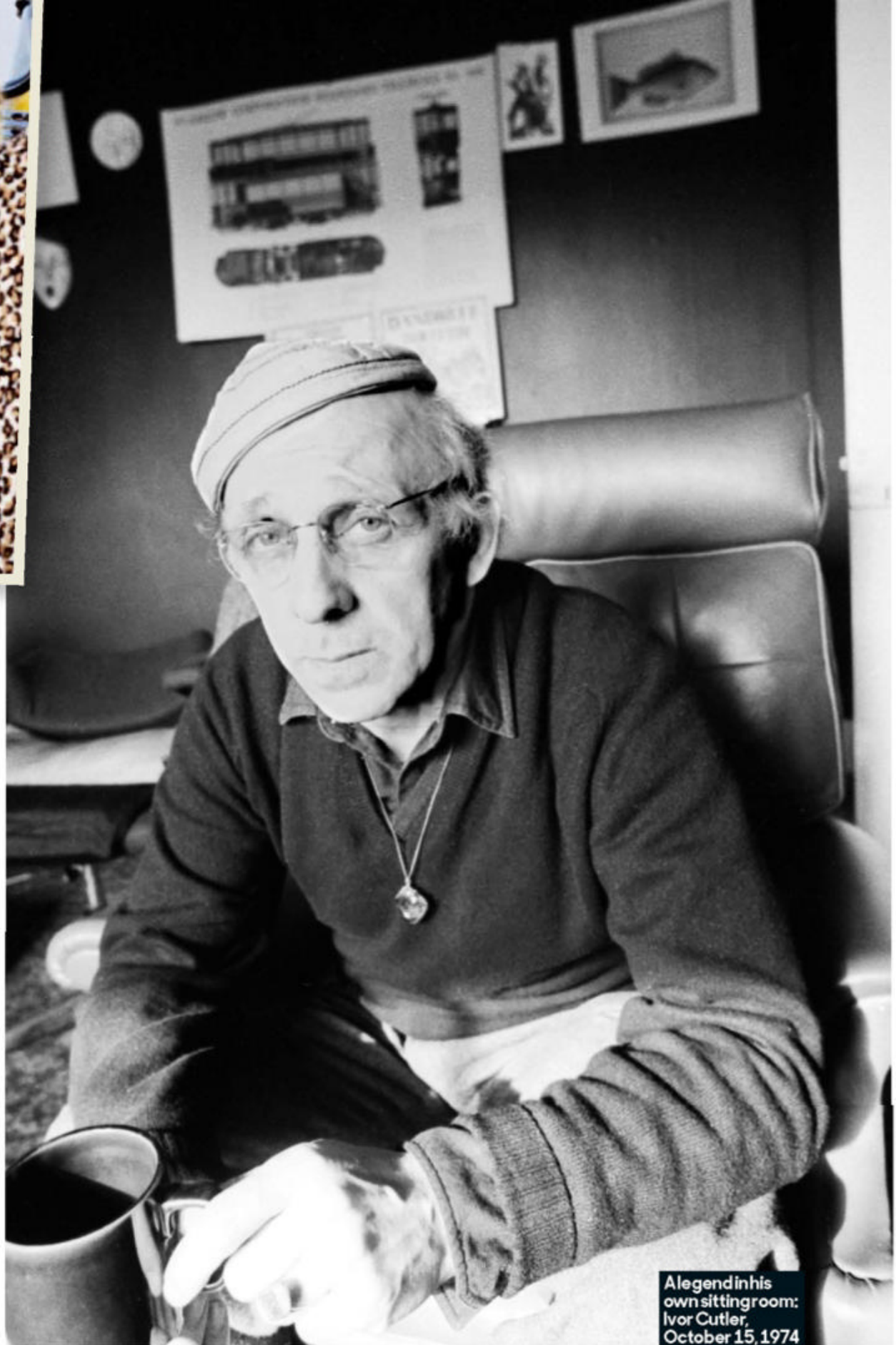
OUT NOW

RESET SLEEVE BY MARCO PAPIRO
POSTER ART BY STUDIO SPARKS & MATTHEW COOPER





With John Lennon, filming *Magical Mystery Tour*, September 14, 1967



A legend in his own sitting room: Ivor Cutler, October 15, 1974

Ivor the Ingenious

Celebrating the centenary of canny Scots poet and much-loved indie touchstone **Ivor Cutler**

HAVING enchanted The Beatles as lugubrious would-be bus conductor Buster Bloodvessel during the making of *Magical Mystery Tour*, Ivor Cutler received what he considered an indecent proposal from one of the Fab Four to work with their children as a private tutor. The sporan-dry Scottish humorist said he turned the offer down “on socialist principles”, adding: “What made their kids more special than other kids?”

Released to commemorate what would have been his 100th birthday on January 15, Bruce Lindsay’s new biography *A Life Outside The Sitting Room* shows how Cutler was far too determinedly strange to be anyone’s pet eccentric. The Glaswegian’s surreal poems, songs and meditations on his Govan childhood entranced generations, from the smart set at Peter Cook’s Establishment club to generations of John Peel listeners. Cutler’s voice-and-harmonium combination graced the finale of Robert Wyatt’s 1974 masterwork *Rock Bottom* and his perverse records were released on the hippest labels of his age: Virgin and Harvest in the 1970s, Rough Trade in the ’80s and Creation in the ’90s.

“It’s the imagination of the man,” says Lindsay, explaining Cutler’s appeal. “He can sing a beautiful song like ‘I’m Going In A Field’ – one of Paul McCartney’s favourites – and he can sing a song from the perspective of a yellow fly.” Matt Brennan (aka Citizen Bravo), who

co-ordinated 2020’s all-star Cutler tribute LP, *Return To Y’Hup*, adds: “He created an absolutely unique and self-contained world through his music, prose and poetry. By operating on the fringes of so many forms of music and art, he attracted admirers from all genres into his orbit.”

A sensitive boy deemed too dreamy to complete his training as an RAF navigator during World War II, Cutler drifted into teaching, including a revelatory spell at AS Neill’s “school without rules”, Summerhill. He continued to work

“He had a very individual outlook and didn’t seem to give a damn what anyone thought”

EMMA POLLOCK

in London primary schools while eventually deciding to perform his own material after publishers could not persuade any artists to record his strange songs. The Beatles dragged him onto the *Magical Mystery Tour* bus after hearing him on BBC radio and he would continue

to be a solitary presence on the margins of the London cultural scene (amusing himself by leaving gnomonic sticky notes around town while riding his bicycle out from his Camden flat) until his death, aged 83, in March 2006.

Emma Pollock was entranced by the grim twinkle of Cutler’s *Life In A Scotch Sitting Room* stories, which were tour-bus go-tos during her time with The Delgados. “It’s that kind of withering wit – that very Scottish take on life when there’s just the hint of a joke but not any more than that,” she tells *Uncut*.

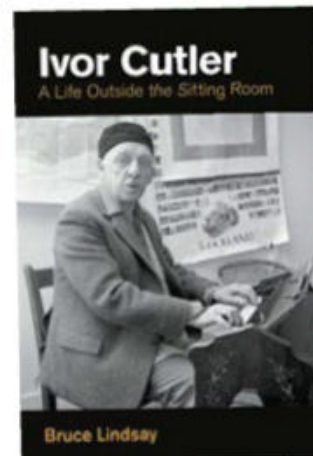
“He had a very individual outlook and he didn’t seem to give a damn what anyone thought.” Lindsay agrees: “There are certainly comparisons with people like Spike Milligan. But with Ivor, I think everything he

did, he did primarily for himself.”

Lindsay never got to interview Cutler himself, but assembles his complicated story with the help of a raft of friends and relatives – not least Cutler’s two sons, and poet Phyllis April King, who as Cutler’s partner for much of his later life did not need to address him as “Mr Cutler”, a protocol the artist demanded of anyone meeting him for the first time. Stern and inscrutable but mischievous and at times painfully poignant (hear 1998’s “I Built A House” and weep),

Cutler said of himself: “If I am a genius, I’m a genius in a very small way indeed.” Here, his tiny light shines bright.

© JIM WIRTH



Ivor Cutler: A Life Outside The Sitting Room is published by Equinox, Jan 15 (£25)



Almanac brothers (and sisters) band: Bryce and Aaron Dessner with Jessica Dessner and Rebekka Karijord

Mountain time

As *Complete Mountain Almanac*, Rebekka Karijord and Jessica Dessner have written a song for every month of the year – with the aid of the latter’s notable siblings

JESSICA Dessner may be due some of the credit for the success of *The National*. “There’s a long tradition, from the time we were teenagers, of me playing music for my brothers that I think they should like,” says the poet, dancer, visual artist and sister to that band’s twin guitarists Bryce and Aaron. “I remember in early interviews they used to give credit to their punky older sister playing stuff, and my punky boyfriends coming around to teach them to play drums.”

When Dessner began collaborating with Stockholm-based Norwegian singer and composer Rebekka Karijord, it was time for her to call in a return favour. “In 2018 we were all together at Aaron’s house for Christmas, and I said, ‘Listen, there’s this project I want to tell you about.’ I played a couple of demos and they both got ‘the look’. I know the look! In the end I said, ‘Would you guys want to be a part of it?’ It just happened organically. Also, there’s an element of big sister telling little brothers what to do! It’s rare nowadays that I do that, but if I can use it, I will...”

It’s easy to hear why the Dessner brothers got “the look”. Combining

Jessica’s poetry with Karijord’s music and melodies, *Complete Mountain Almanac* is an intimate, immersive mix of folk, classical and chamber music. Its 12 songs, one for every month of the year, address decay and healing, both global and personal.

The project had a prolonged gestation. Friends since the 2000s, Karijord contacted Dessner in 2016 after struggling with the idea of writing “a climate change record. I thought it was going to be solely instrumental, but I felt it was too abstract, too big to grasp. I contacted Jessica and said, ‘Do you want to try to write something for this project?’ She said yes right away and we started emailing back and forth.”

Momentum then stalled while Dessner processed a breast cancer diagnosis. “Rebekka very gracefully left me alone for the most intensive part of that,” she says. “At some point, she sent me a little note to say that if I wanted to

use the project to address what I was going through health-wise, she would be totally open to that. I couldn’t commit to anything, but I held that in mind.”

Eight months later, Karijord visited Dessner at her home in rural northern Italy. “Jessica handed me this 40-page manuscript called *Complete Mountain Almanac* and said, ‘It’s all yours.’ She was able to

express exactly what I wanted to say but in a far more personal manner. There’s a synergy between the cancer in our natural world, our attack on ourselves, and the essence of a person going through a disease, the body attacking itself. She managed to tie those

things together. I very freely took what stood out to me, then sent her demos.”

Once schedules aligned, the songs were recorded in Paris early in 2020, just before lockdown. Used to working alone, Karijord set aside her usual “control freakery”, apart from one rule: “I wanted that every

“There’s an element of big sister telling little brothers what to do!”

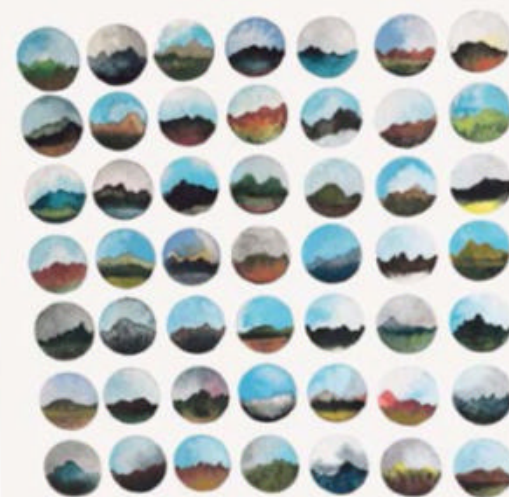
JESSICA DESSNER

song was made live with only me and the two brothers playing,” she says. Minimalist overdubs were added later, alongside string arrangements written by Bryce and performed by the Malmö Symphony Orchestra, “but the fundamentals should be live with all the flaws and love and edge. And I wanted to record it chronologically. ‘January’ is the first take we did in the studio together. That week was one of the most intense and inspiring I’ve ever had.”

Karijord is planning live shows with the twins, and she and Jessica are already discussing a new collaboration. “We’re talking about the next one,” says Dessner. “We need some time to let this one land, then we’ll see where we go.”

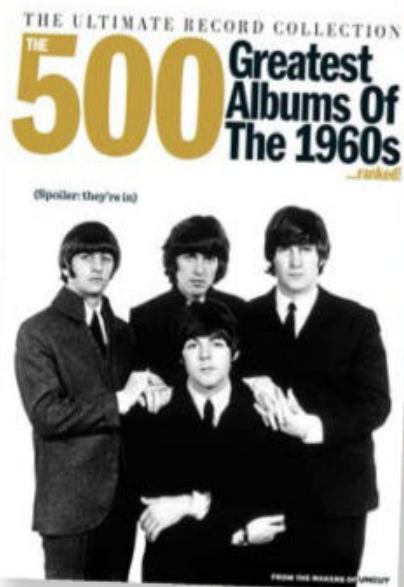
GRAEME THOMSON

Complete Mountain Almanac is out on January 27 via Bella Union



A QUICK ONE

Two thumbs up for our deluxe, updated **Ultimate Music Guide** to **Paul McCartney**. Celebrating Paul's 80th birthday year, and his 60th as a recording artist, it covers all his solo work from *McCartney* to *McCartney III*, with selections from our archive of classic Macc interviews. It's in shops on December 15, but buy direct from us at Uncut.co.uk/single to receive an exclusive McCartney gift...



Still on sale is our quarterly special, **The 500 Greatest Albums Of The 1960s...Ranked!**. It's not only an impressive list to debate, it's an indispensable guide to how music was made in that decade...



A new **Teardrop Explodes** boxset is coming on March 24. **Culture Bunker 1978-82** compiles all the great Liverpool group's singles and B-sides, plus four additional discs of demos, outtakes and live tracks...

Black Deer Festival Of Americana returns to Eridge Park, Kent, on June 16-18, 2023. Among the first names to be revealed are **Bonnie Raitt, Lucinda Williams, Calexico, Allison Russell** and **Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats**...

"Mick wanted me"

He was *this* close to being a Rolling Stone. Instead, Harvey Mandel continues to weave solo guitar magic

IT was 3am in LA and Harvey Mandel was in bed when he got the call from Mick Jagger. The Stones were recording in Berlin, Mick Taylor had left and they needed a guitar player – could he get there the next day? That's how Mandel found himself recording two songs ("Hot Stuff" and "Memory Motel") for *Black And Blue* in what was essentially an audition for joining the Stones.

"Mick wanted me," Mandel recalls. "If it was up to him, I'd be a millionaire. I was one thread from being a Rolling Stone and that last thread was Keith Richards, who fucked me. He wanted Ron Wood, who was his buddy. Bill Wyman liked my stuff, he wanted me to get the job, they all did. It was just Keith who fucked me up. Nicky Hopkins told me Jagger and Keith had been arguing all day and Keith won the argument. Mick was the big shot but Keith ran the show. But I'm still the only American guitar player to play lead on a Stones album, so I have that."

Mandel had earned his audition through his work with Canned Heat and John Mayall but also on a series of fantastic solo albums starting with

1969's instrumental *Cristo Redentor*, featuring his distinctive guitar tones. He's returned to this mode of late, making his solo comeback with 2016's *Snake Pit* and recording his new album, *Who's Calling*, with the same rhythm section. "It's definitely one of the best albums I've done," he says. "A bass player and drummer laid down some tracks. I played my stuff, did a lot of cutting and pasting and putting shit together. It's my favourite album so far. Every album I did sounded good, but this is the first I've done that I have been completely satisfied with."

Born in Detroit but raised in Chicago, Mandel learned his trade in the city's blues scene. That's where Barry Goldberg gave him the nickname "Snake" thanks to the leather trenchcoat he wore. Mandel played on Charley Musselwhite's classic 1967 record *Stand Back!* and then joined Canned Heat in time for Woodstock – it was just his third show with the group. "It was unbelievable. The biggest, most ridiculous place I ever played. Hundreds of thousands of people staring at you like you are at the end of a microscope."

After Canned Heat came a stint with John Mayall and then one album with Pure Food And Drug Act. While his work as a sideman was impressive, it's those solo albums that really

highlighted his talent. His rich, sustained playing on 1971's brilliant *Baby Batter* produced a sound far from blues, occupying a world of psychedelic jazz-rock fusion with Latin American touches, bringing him to the attention of Mick Jagger and that ultimately ill-fated Rolling Stones stint.

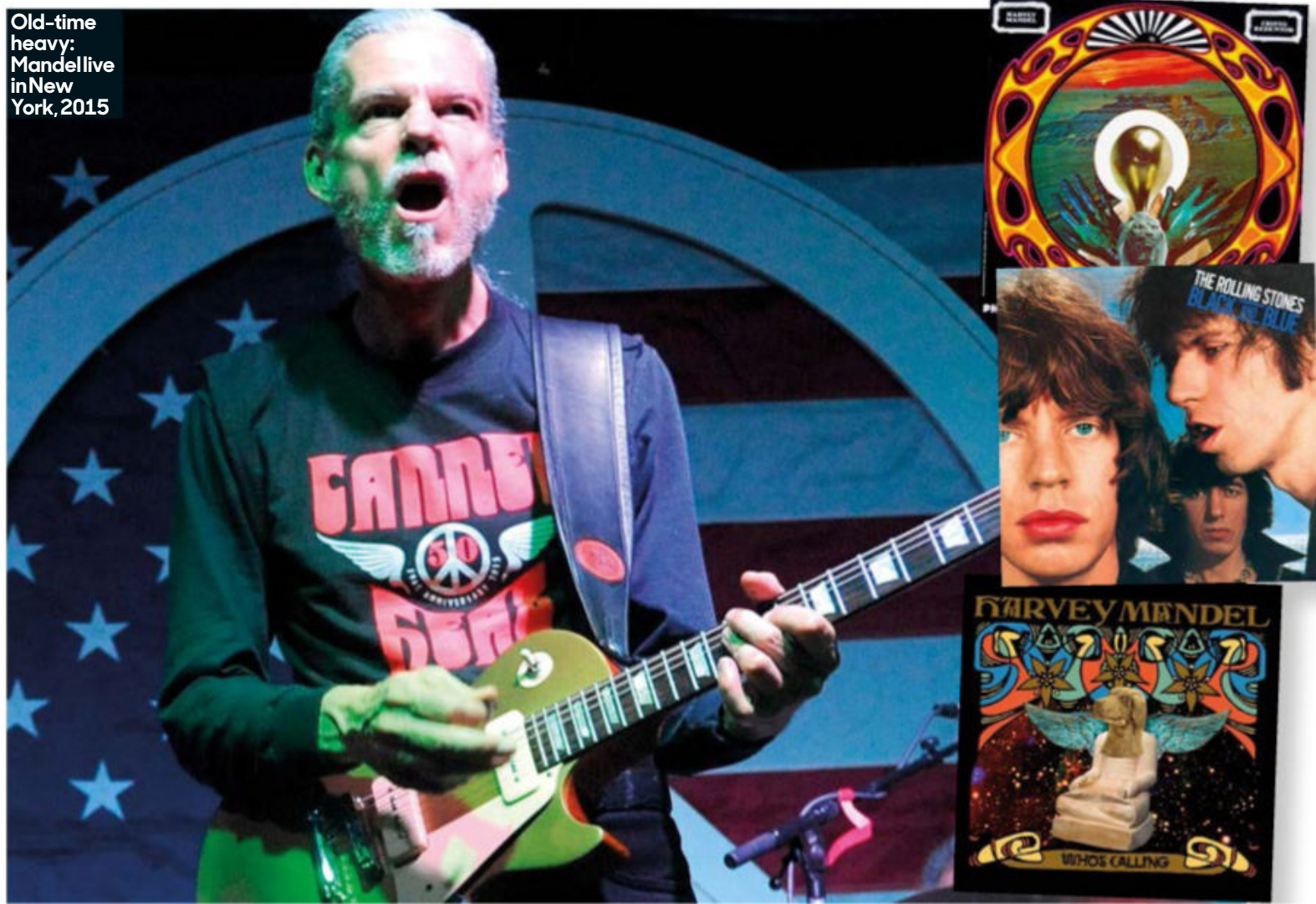
Hiding his disappointment, Mandel returned to Chicago and put together a band, touring constantly over the

next three decades before Tompkins Square encouraged him to return to the studio with *Snake Pit* and now *Who's Calling*. In recent years, he's suffered health setbacks – as we speak, he's waiting for an ambulance to take him for tests – but continues to stretch

himself on record. He clearly had the musical chops to be a Stone, but could he party like one? "I could have handled it!" he insists. "They can't out-party me, no way. I party like I play guitar. Back in Chicago I learned how to get up on stage with some of those old-time heavies and the more I did it the better I got. I played with Buddy Guy, Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf. All these great people. After a while, not to brag, I became one of them." **PETER WATTS**

Who's Calling is released by Tompkins Square on December 9

"Bill Wyman liked my stuff, they all did. It was just Keith who fucked me up"



Old-time heavy: Mandel live in New York, 2015

UNCUT PLAYLIST

On the stereo this month...



YOLA TENGO

This Stupid World MATADOR
Everything you'd want from a Yo La Tengo record at this stage: noise, tunes, tenderness, regret, sage advice, goofiness, smudgy motorik jams... and yoyo moves!

SPENCER CULLUM

Spencer Cullum's Coin Collection 2

FULL TIME HOBBY

Nashville's Essex expat trundles further down his idiosyncratic folk-jazz path, with contributions from Rich Ruth, Erin Rae, Caitlin Rose, and a verse in Japanese from Yuma Abe.

HAWKLINE

Milk For Flowers

HEAVENLY
"With the elegance of Nero/Made divine by feeling zero" – Witty knockabout pop, glumly sung, in the vein of the album's producer, Cate Le Bon.



MODERN STUDIES

"Cassandra" EP

FIRE
Experimental follow-up to February's rousing *We Are There* LP, working "parallel to the myth" – but still with great songs. Grab the limited-edition cassette!

YOUNG FATHERS

Heavy Heavy

NINJA TUNE
"Life is so boring when you're already the best", holler the ebullient Edinburgh trio. "What's the story when you go beyond the edge?"

LISA O'NEILL

All Of This Is Chance

ROUGH TRADE
All hail the mushroom-gatherers! Eccentric and inventive Irish drone-folk, sounding centuries-old and totally fresh.

KAHIL EL'ZABAR'S ETHNIC HERITAGE ENSEMBLE

Spirit Gatherer: Tribute To Don Cherry

SPIRITMUSE
Companion to the recent London Jazz Fest concert, with David Ornette Cherry joining the gang to celebrate the music and philosophy of his influential pa.

DAVE OKUMU & THE 7 GENERATIONS

I Came From Love

TRANSGRESSIVE
The Invisible frontman merges history, protest and soulful electro-rock on this ambitious, cinematic treatise, with imperious narration from Grace Jones.



HACK-POETS GUILD

Blackletter Garland

ONE LITTLE INDEPENDENT

Marry Waterson, Lisa Knapp and Nathaniel Mann devise ingenious new settings for broadside ballads scavenged from the Bodleian Library.

LARAAJI

Segue To Infinity

NUMERO GROUP
Four LPs of celestial vibrations for zither, kalimba and flute, from acetates found in a storage locker and sold on eBay. You've been outblissed!

I'M
NEW
HERE



Gaye Su Akyol

Turkish psych dervish who wants her listeners to do more than just dance

GROWING up watching *Xena*, Gaye Su Akyol has become Anatolian rock's warrior princess, armoured in lavish silver costumes as she leads her band of gold-masked musicians towards the outer limits of Turkish psychedelia, collecting fans including Iggy Pop along the way. She is also playfully sexual and queer-supportive, pushing the boundaries of acceptable female behaviour in Erdogan's Turkey. The cover of her fourth album, *Anadolu Ejderi*, casts her as the titular Anatolian Dragon, with a serpent's tongue in a burning world.

Uncut meets Akyol in her apartment in Kadıköy, the Istanbul neighbourhood on the Bosphorus's Asian side which has become a secular, bohemian redoubt from Erdogan's reach. It's a home filled with the passions of this artist's daughter, from Bedri Rahmi Eyüboğlu's Anatolian folkloric prints to an Iggy action doll. We talk in the music room where *Anadolu Ejderi*'s vocals were taped. The album's a decisive move forward from the surf-inflected dreamworld of its 2018 predecessor, *İstikrarlı Hayal Hakikattir*, encompassing psychedelic dance bangers and "Biz Ne Zaman Düşman Olduk", a spectral, trip-hoppy ballad. "I don't care about genres," Akyol explains, "I'm thinking about Turkish psychedelia with African beats."

Though steeped in Anatolian rock's liberated golden age – prior to its crushing in 1980's military coup – Akyol prefers the future to the past. "There were retro-futuristic ideas in Turkish psychedelic records in the '70s too," she insists. "You can see it in Barış Manço's album *2023 [made in 1975]*". Akyol's own lyrics reflect her

fascination with quantum theories, where past, present and future coexist.

Anatolian rock is experiencing a global revival now, reflected in the Grammy-winning success of the Netherlands-based Altın Gün. Akyol, though, warns that new bands need to respect the music's embattled soul. "One of the bands who just cover the old songs said, 'We are not political, we're just trying to make people dance,'" she snorts. "Go and make disco music, come on! This is not the right place. You can see the political events from songs which were written in the '60s and '70s. There was a deep culture then, very real music combining the tradition of the Anatolian region's original poets with rock. Musicians like Cem Keraca had to leave their mother country for making this music – first to jail, then Germany. Now you are taking their songs to make people dance at festivals. I don't respect that." Akyol is equally resistant to being labelled a world music star: "I hate that. Hunting cultures is so colonial and ugly."

Akyol's western influences include Nirvana, first heard when she was nine. "They showed me a door that I never knew existed," she says. "And it magically opened, and I was inside." The late Mark Sandman's band Morphine were equally revelatory. "Morphine was the biggest inspiration for my music," she considers. "They were authentic, dark and jazzy, sounding like something from another planet. I can see the real pain of the world in their music." A collaboration with Morphine saxophonist Dana Colley is ongoing.

Anadolu Ejderi's final track, "İçinde Uyanıyoruz Hakikatin" ("We Are Waking Up In Reality"), is a huskily sung, haunting hellscape of Istanbul's woes, identifying with Syd Barrett and Brian Jones, two dissolute rock stars who flamed out. By contrast, Akyol is fearlessly facing her future. 📍

NICK HASTED

I'M YOUR FAN



"Carrying on the tradition of Andolu psych rock, Gaye Su Akyol brings into the present the spirit of revolution"
Dana Colley

There's A World

FREE CD

15 tracks of the month's best new music

1 FRAN Palm Trees

We begin this month with a slow-burning triumph from Chicago's Maria Jacobson and her band. Taken from their second album, *Leaving*, it's an existential, atmospheric waltz that finds the songwriter lamenting, "How can I give it away?/ Wanting it to last another day..."

2 THE BAD ENDS Thanksgiving 1915

If getting REM's Bill Berry back behind the kit wasn't impressive enough, the debut album by Mike Mantione's Bad Ends is excellent in its own right. Here's a sprightly piece of chiming, heartland garage rock, a highlight of *The Power And The Glory*, reminiscent of the Truckers, The Replacements and – of course – their drummer's old band.



3 THE MURDER CAPITAL Ethel

Gigi's Recovery is the second album by this Dublin five-piece, and a massive evolution from their debut, 2019's *When I Have Fears*. On tracks like "Ethel", frontman James McGovern's favourite song on the record, they bend guitar music into eerie new shapes.

4 PHIL RANELIN, WENDELL HARRISON, ADRIAN YOUNGE & ALI SHAHEED MUHAMMAD Fire In Detroit

Ranelin and Harrison, renowned for their work in jazz troupe The Tribe and with their own Tribe Records, have here teamed up with the Jazz Is Dead production duo for an exhilarating full-length collaboration. The result is funky and arresting, at once hypermodern and nostalgically retro, as if electric Miles had teamed up with Stereolab.

5 MEG BAIRD Star Hill Song

Though she's worked with Mary Lattimore (among others) in recent times, it's been seven long years since Baird's last solo album. Here, then, is *Furling*, a spectral, spacey delight with Baird's weightless, acoustic folk songs decorated by the kosmische guitar of partner Charlie Saufley. Read the full review on page 22.

6 THE TUBS Round The Bend

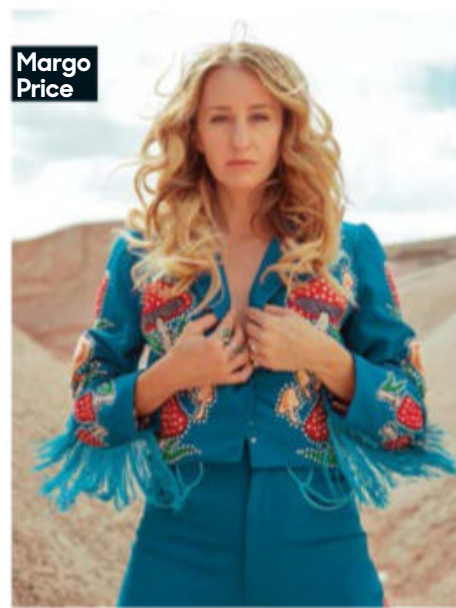
On their debut album, *Dead Meat*, this London group, signed to the reliably great Trouble In Mind label, come on like spiritual heirs to The Soft Boys. There are scrappy, noisy, punky elements, but these are side-by-side with the folk-rock feel of prime Richard Thompson or even early Steeleye Span. Dig in.

7 MARGO PRICE Change Of Heart

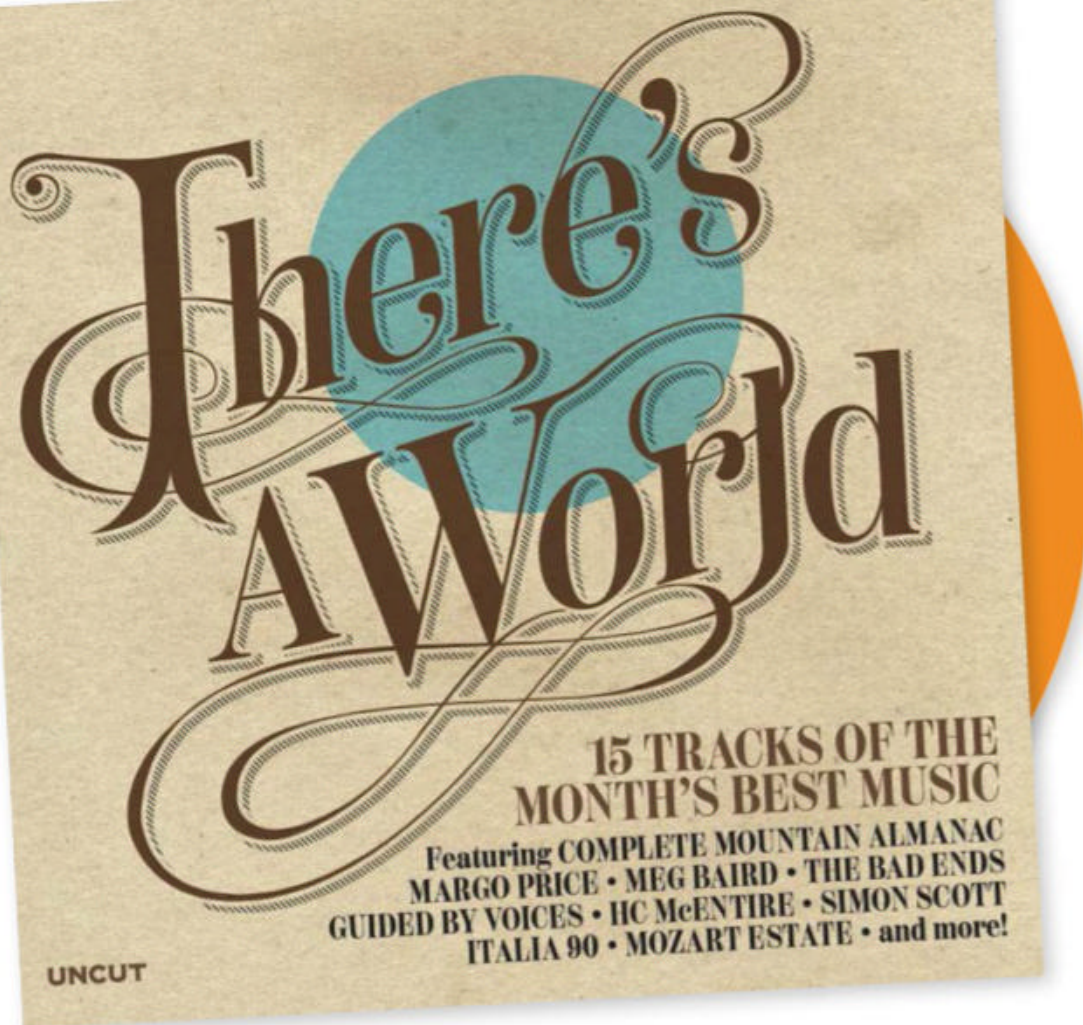
With Jonathan Wilson producing, *Strays* finds Price more confident and eclectic than ever, embracing a kind of psychedelic American rock with a twang in its step. "You run from danger, straight into trouble", she sings here, as blues guitars growl and echoing organ pounds. Head to page 62 for our feature.

8 MOZART ESTATE Vanilla Gorilla

Lawrence returns this month with *Pop-Up! Ker-Ching! And The Possibilities Of Modern Shopping*, the latest in his journey to the centre of darkest, kitschiest Britain. While it's still hard to quite comprehend Lawrence as the same fellow who helmed those callow early Felt records, "Vanilla Gorilla" – dayglo



Margo Price



UNCUT

synths, slap bass and all – is irresistible. The man himself answers your questions on page 14.

9 SUSS The Open Door

Following the death of Gary Leib, the remaining SUSS members – Pat Irwin, Bob Holmes and Jonathan Gregg – put the finishing touches to this superb self-titled release, more a collection of EPs, some heard and others unreleased. Buzzing, clattering and droning beautifully, this new track is a delightful slice of ambient Americana.

10 HC McENTIRE New View

Every Acre is the third solo album from North Carolina's Heather McEntire, and it continues the tender, atmospheric folk-rock she mastered on 2020's *Eno Axis*. "Catch me and wreck me/I'll take more of you", she croons defiantly. Check out our lead review on page 34.

11 COMPLETE MOUNTAIN ALMANAC May

Rebekka Karijord and Jessica Dessner have crafted a stellar self-titled album, with some help from the latter's brothers from The National. Fragile and earthy, these 12 songs chart the turning of the year, with "May" a pastoral, melancholic entry to summer. Meet the group on page 9.

12 ITALIA 90 Tales From Beyond

This English four-piece wrangle arty '70s punk into the modern day on their debut album, *Living Human Treasure*. One might file them

alongside Idles and Fontaines DC, but you sense that Wire, PiL or Crass would suit them just fine, too. Altogether now: "Re-educate, unlearn/Rinse and reuse..."

13 WHITEHORSE Bet The Farm

Luke Doucet and Melissa McClelland's new LP, *I'm Not Crying, You're Crying*, is our Americana Album Of The Month, and here's the record's brassiest, most arresting track, with McClelland doing her best take on Dolly.

14 GUIDED BY VOICES Slowly On The Wheel

La La Land is something like Robert Pollard and co's 14th album since the latest lineup – also their best in years – coalesced in 2017. It tops an incredible run of form for the Dayton, Ohio group – head to page 24 for a review and chat with Uncle Bob himself.

15 SIMON SCOTT The Black Fens

Also known as Slowdive's drummer, Scott is a composer in his own right. *Long Drove*, his latest solo album, is built around field recordings from his East Anglian home, with tracks like this reminiscent of Eno's beautifully wintry *Ambient 4: On Land*. 🎧



Guided By Voices

CARGO RECORDS - BEST OF THE YEAR 2022



BLACK LIPS
APOCALYPSE LOVE
FIRE RECORDS
LP / CD



THE BRIAN JONESTOWN MASSACRE
FIRE DOESN'T GROW ON TREES
A RECORDINGS
LP / CD



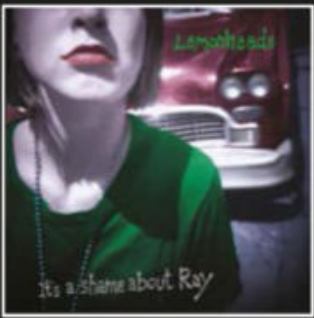
GOAT
OH DEATH
ROCKET RECORDINGS
LP / CD



MARINA ALLEN
CENTRIFICS
FIRE RECORDS
LP / CD



THE REDS, PINKS AND PURPLES
SUMMER AT LAND'S END
TOUGH LOVE
LP / CD



THE LEMONHEADS
IT'S A SHAME ABOUT RAY
(30TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION)
FIRE RECORDS
2LP / 2CD



RUSSIAN CIRCLES
GNOSIS
SARGENT HOUSE
LP / CD



PICTISH TRAIL
ISLAND FAMILY
FIRE RECORDS
LP / CD



HOLLIE COOK
HAPPY HOUR
MERGE RECORDS
LP / CD



THE MOUNTAIN GOATS
BLEED OUT
MERGE RECORDS
LP / CD



JOAN SHELLEY
THE SPUR
NO QUARTER
LP / CD



THE DREAM SYNDICATE
ULTRAVIOLET BATTLE HYMNS AND
TRUE CONFESSIONS
FIRE RECORDS
LP / CD



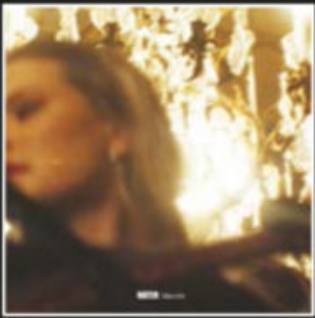
SAY SHE SHE
PRISM
KARMA CHIEF RECORDS
LP / CD



IBILIO SOUND MACHINE
ELECTRICITY
MERGE RECORDS
LP / CD



YEULE
GLITCH PRINCESS
BAYONET
LP / CD



HATER
SINCERE
FIRE RECORDS
LP / CD



FENELLA
THE METALLIC INDEX
FIRE RECORDS
LP



50 FOOT WAVE
BLACK PEARL
FIRE RECORDS
LP / CD



TIM BERNARDES
MIL COISAS INVISÍVEIS
PSYCHIC HOTLINE
LP / CD



BEIRUT
ARTIFACTS
POMPEII RECORDS
2LP / 2CD

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**“I love the
music world
too much to
reform Felt”**



AN AUDIENCE WITH...

Lawrence

“A MORE serious name for serious times,” says Lawrence, explaining the recent switch from Go-Kart Mozart to Mozart Estate as he shuffles into the Barbican with his takeaway cuppa. “I love novelty records but I wanted to hit a bit harder this time.” Indeed, there’s a more prominent seam of mordant social commentary on his latest effort, as well as an unexpected dalliance with what he calls “singer-songwriter stuff”, not heard since the final days of Felt. But the album still has a defiantly daft title – *Pop-Up! Ker-Ching! And The Possibilities Of Modern Shopping* – and kicks off with a song called “I’m Gonna Wiggle”.

“Everyone’s done a wiggle song,” he protests. “Lou Reed’s done one, Bob Dylan’s done one.” Touché! There are other signs, too, that this eternally thwarted dreamer is starting to get real. Although he still doesn’t own a computer or a smartphone, Lawrence has recently launched a webstore and a Twitter account. He seems to have reluctantly accepted the benefits of communing directly with his small but dedicated fanbase, rather than waiting in vain for Radio 1 to playlist his latest single and thrust him towards superstardom.

“I don’t want that to be the way,” he says, “but I’m just gonna have to hone in on the fans. Even Taylor Swift, they all do that now. We have to find our audience and give them good stuff to invest in. And then hopefully I can branch out in some way. Finally get to where I want to be, that kind of Nick Cave world. That’s what I’m after.”

How do you write a song? Do you use a keyboard, a guitar, or come up with the melody in your head and hum it to your musicians?
José Manuel Caturla, Alicante, Spain

The Felt, Denim and now Mozart Estate mainman on baseball caps, Record Store Day and his elusive quest for fame: “I’m prepared to pay a price for that, yes”

Interview by SAM RICHARDS



Sometimes I write with Terry Miles, and that can take the form of him giving me a CD-R with a song on it, and then we throw it back and forth. Or sometimes I’ll write the whole song myself, and I can write on guitar or keyboard. Recently, I’ve been walking around the edges of London writing songs in my head. I’ll stop at one of those electricity boxes and get my book out quickly



Felt in 1983: Lawrence and Maurice Deebank (centre)

and write it down. If you remember the melody when you get home, you know it’s a great song.

I was fortunate enough to see you with Felt back in the mid-’80s. What do you put your longevity down to?
Jim Barr, Darlington

A desire to be famous, really. A desire to taste the richness of fame. Gosh, can you imagine? Not having to go on the tube, just being able to jump on an aeroplane. Being picked up from a gig in a limo and not jumping in the van with all the equipment... Because I think I’ve got something. It’s been with me since I was a child, and it’s never gone away. The first poem I wrote was when I was eight. I always wanted to do something with that, but I never wanted to be niche. Even when I made my first single, which was only 500 copies so I knew that it couldn’t go in the charts, I saw it as a stepping stone. I’ll come through the underground, that was my plan. It’s still on.

Don’t you ever just think, ‘Fuck it, I’m owed a Felt payday,’ and join the play-the-album-in-full circuit?
Scott McCready, via email

Never. I love the music world too much to do that. Let all the others do it; I’ll keep my integrity intact. When you make a statement, you have to stick by it. I said, “This band finishes now” – and that’s it, finished. You can’t go, “Oh, I’m coming back now that we’re a bit more famous.” As the years go on, more and more people reform their bands, so it’s a lonely road that I’m on. But someone’s got to stand up and say it’s not a good thing to do.

Is a reconciliation with Maurice Deebank possible?
Alex Norman, Kent

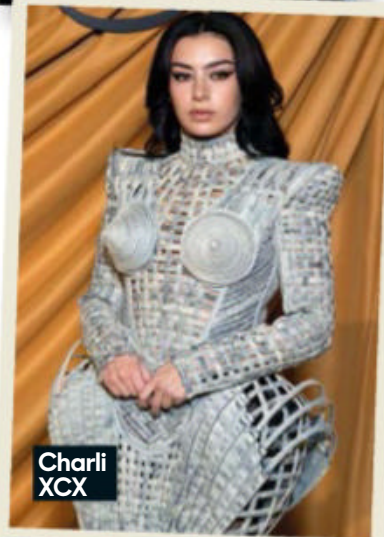
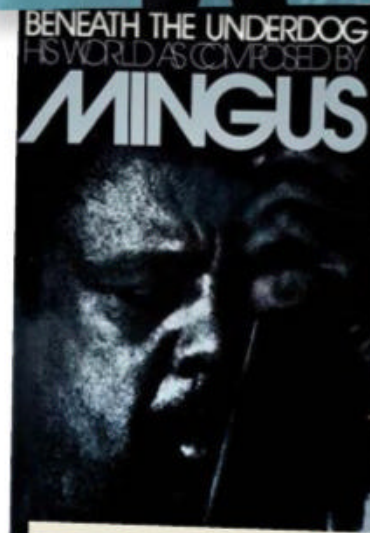
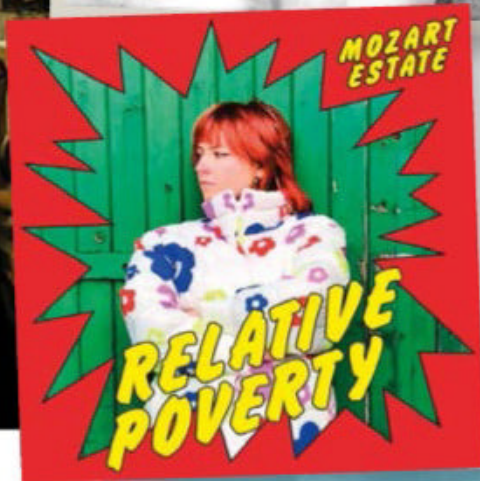
No, it’s not. We finished in 1985 and from that day on it’s never been on the table. When he left, I knew he’d left the music business. I’ve tried [to get in touch] but he doesn’t like me. He has an image of me I can’t change. When we did the reissues, ➤



To cap it all: Lawrence in 2010



Lawrence in Denim



Charli XCX

it's true or not." Have you ever read *Beneath The Underdog* by Charles Mingus? He writes it as three different Minguses, there's three of them inside him. It's the most brilliant autobiography. The publisher said, "Have you got any other ideas?"

How many baseball caps do you own and where do you get them from?
David Kirkham, via email

There's a company that makes them for me. But I don't want you to find out, because I don't want loads of people at my gigs wearing them! I've never seen anyone else [*who's got one*] with a visor.

What is the album you never tire of hearing? Mine's *Transformer!*
Stevie Lynch, via email

The Psychomodo, Cockney Rebel. At the time I loved it simply for what it was: he had a unique voice, and the lyrics were poetic and naive. But it's travelled so well. It's almost like glam Dylan, which I didn't get at the time. He's taken the Dylan idea into the mid-'70s glitter rock arena, which Bob never travelled into, he never made that excursion.

The Devil appears in your tower block and offers you *The Contract*: superstardom, endless riches and the supermodel girlfriend of your dreams – in exchange for your soul. Do you push him out of the window, or ask him for a pen?

Paul Simpson, via email

Paul Simpson from the Wild Swans? He wrote a question? That's amazing, I'm a massive fan. Well, of course I'd sign... Faustian pacts have always been good. When Robert Johnson met the Devil, it only worked out good for him.

I mean, he died young. But he got famous, didn't he? The answer is: I'm prepared to pay a price for that, yes.

You once sang that you wanted your epitaph to be the second line of Felt's "Black Ship In The Harbour" [*"I was a moment that quickly passed"*]. Has that changed?
Tom Wilson, via email

It's true, it would look beautiful on a gravestone. But where'd you put that gravestone? Because I've been thinking now I should be cremated. Although someone told me you can actually have a plaque or something in the crematorium, so I could still

have that even if I wasn't buried. That line sums up humanity really, doesn't it? It's so fleeting. 🕒

Pop-Up! Ker-Ching! And The Possibilities Of Modern Shopping is released on January 27 via West Midlands Records/Cherry Red

I wrote him a letter. I said, "We were kids... reissues are coming, do you want to talk about them? I want to put them out how they should have been." I made an effort but he didn't respond at all. Him and the others were very suspicious of my motives. They remember me as a kid when I was very ambitious; as well as making beautiful music, I wanted to make it big. And they found that hard to deal with, Maurice especially. But I do have massive respect for him as a musician. He's still my favourite guitar player, and I wanted nothing but to be his friend.

Would you or could you ever write something in Felt mode again?
Sparky, via email

Yeah, of course, 'cos it's my songs. I'm planning on doing something more serious in the future. I've worked with keyboards a lot recently, so I'm looking for a great guitarist, somebody really special like Maurice. It's hard to find somebody that good – and who's young, who's not married, who hasn't got any kids and isn't in six other bands. Not to do Felt songs, but to continue in my style of writing, using the guitar as a lead instrument.

At a Q&A screening of *Lawrence Of Belgravia*, director Paul Kelly mentioned that during its making you had turned down an approach to write a song for a famous singer/ band that would have helped you financially. What would it take for you to write a song for another artist?
James Andrew, via email

There's only one offer that came in, and I didn't want to do it. I thought it might work against me, so I turned it down. But that's not to say I wouldn't do stuff if it was the right thing, because I'd like to collaborate, absolutely. Not in terms of making a record together, but to help somebody with lyrics, melody, whatever, and you get some of the publishing. I'd seek it out, if I knew how to do that. I'm open to offers, for sure. I'd like to work on a song with Charli XCX. She doesn't need me, but I'd love to bring something to her table.

I see there's a track on the new album called "Record Store Day". An event you're in favour of?
Mark Cheadle, Sheffield

It's good for the music business. It helps to sell records, it helps to promote musicians and it helps record shops. We need all the help we can get in the music world, so Record Store Day is perfect. The song isn't a critique at all, but it is about a band who are releasing a record on Record Store Day because they wanna cash in. People have hijacked it and you get these 7"s that are as much as an album... It's been hijacked by the Bowie industry and it wasn't meant for that, it was meant to help the underground. But I'm not down on it, 'cos it's still good.

I heard you say recently you'd never been on holiday. Given the opportunity, where would you go?
Matt Benson, Canterbury

I've always wanted to go to Prague and visit the Jewish cemetery. Budapest, Poland. I like gloomy countries; I don't want to go and lie on a beach.

Would you ever write your autobiography?
James Griffiths, via email

I've had a couple of offers, but what I don't want to do is: "Grandad worked down the mine..." That history of the family thing is so boring. I said to one publisher, "I've got this idea, it's written as you won't know whether

"I never wanted to be niche. I'll come through the underground, that was my plan. It's still on"

ONE LITTLE INDEPENDENT RECORDS



Bad Breeding - 'Human Capital'

"The timing of Human Capital and its wider message is so deliciously perfect"
Loud & Quiet



Lomond Campbell - 'Under This Hunger Moon We Fell'

"Juxtaposes a vibrant experimental beat with glacial waves of noise to gorgeous effect"
The Quietus



Björk - 'Fossora'

"The sound of Björk building her home as the mother of it all"
Pitchfork



Poppy Ackroyd - 'Pause Reworked'

"Deceptively simple, this classical composition builds percussion into intersecting melodies"
The Times



Arny Margret - 'they only talk about the weather'

"Beautifully evocative songwriting, a whispered incantation"
Clash Magazine



Polly Paulusma - 'The Pivot On Which The World Turns'

"This album is the work of a master songsmith"
Folk Radio



Kathryn Williams - 'Night Drives'

"Sombre, majestic and extravagant"
UNCUT



Ásgeir - 'Time On My Hands'

"Sweeping, emotive, with a more electronic sonic palate"
NME



Ghost Car - 'Truly Trash'

"There's a powerhouse energy behind Truly Trash that begs to be heard"
The Line Of Best Fit



THE UNCUT GUIDE TO THIS MONTH'S KEY RELEASES

JOHN CALE

Mercy

DOUBLESIX/DOMINO

Veteran experimentalist ventures far out on a hallucinogenic journey. By Tom Pinnock

IF rock fully sparked into life in the mid-'60s, then those pioneers are now well past collecting their pensions. Some are gone, of course, others creatively spent. A select few, over the last few years, have entered a new creative realm: here, the white-hot urgency of youth is regained, this time tempered with the wisdom of age and the bittersweet passing of time. The results have been stunning: there's *Rough And Rowdy Ways*, of course, and *Blackstar*, along with Leonard Cohen's final trio, Roy Harper's *Man & Myth*, *McCartney III*, Bill Fay and Mavis Staples' recent work, and so on. When an album may be your last, there's every reason to not go quietly into that good night.

When a latterday masterpiece is a chance to either distil your craft or launch into wild new adventures, it's no surprise which of those Cale has gone for on *Mercy*, his first album since 2012's *Shifty Adventures In Nookie Wood*. If a reminder is needed, this is the experimentalist who left Wales for New York City, who played in La Monte Young's Theatre Of Eternal Music, who brought much of the pioneering squall to The Velvet Underground and changed rock music, who stuck with Nico and helped her make some incredible solo albums, and who produced

**ALBUM
OF THE
MONTH**
9/10

pivotal records by the Stooges, Patti Smith and Happy Mondays.

Of course, he's never stopped experimenting: two decades ago he got into hip-hop through Snoop Dogg's "Drop It Like It's Hot" and, pushing 81, he's still enraptured by Earl Sweatshirt, Kendrick Lamar and Chance The Rapper. This century, his music has been invigorated, with 2005's rocky *BlackAcetate* and its future-funk follow-up among his best. He's spent the last decade honing his live craft, delving into his whole catalogue, and reassessing past triumphs, most notably on 2016's *M:FANS*, a reworking of 1982's *Music For A New Society*.

All that now feels like taking stock before pushing off into the great unknown – for *Mercy* is the most out-there work Cale has made in some time, a hermetically sealed, hallucinogenic journey that's

as neon-lit and gothic as its cover art. The presence of Cale's voice – familiar, rich and avuncular – almost disguises just how radical much of the music is. For instance, the glitchy, doomy crawl of "Marilyn Monroe's Legs (Beauty Elsewhere)", created in collaboration with Cale favourite Actress, is brought into the light by the Welshman's low croon and high falsetto, flitting hypnotically between a few ➤



John Cale:
making
peace with
Nico, night-
crawling
with Bowie



Cale's taste for the strange and disconcerting comes to the fore on *Mercy*

of conversational lines, or harking back to the disjointed vividness of *Paris 1919* – “*With the camels standing senseless/From driving through the night*” on “Not The End Of The World”, or “*The grandeur that was Europe/Is sinking in the mud*” on “Time Stands Still”. “I Know You’re Happy”, its lilting chorus and Tei Shi’s melodramatic vocals almost suitable for a TikTok clip, depicts an

SLEEVE NOTES

- 1 Mercy (ft Laurel Halo)
- 2 Marilyn Monroe’s Leg (Beauty Elsewhere) (ft Actress)
- 3 Noise Of You
- 4 Story Of Blood (ft Weyes Blood)
- 5 Time Stands Still (ft Sylvan Esso)
- 6 Moonstruck (Nico’s Song)
- 7 Everlasting Days (ft Animal Collective)
- 8 Night Crawling
- 9 Not The End Of The World
- 10 The Legal Status Of Ice (ft Fat White Family)
- 11 I Know You’re Happy (ft Tei Shi)
- 12 Out Your Window

Produced by: John Cale & Nita Scott
Recorded at: ARM Studios, EastWest Studios & Vox Studios, Los Angeles; Snap Studios, London
Personnel: John Cale (vocals, synths, piano, vintage keys, drums, guitar, bass, noises, additional strings), Deantoni Parks (acoustic drums, additional drums, timpani, additional synths), Dustin Boyer (guitar, noises, backing vocals), Joey Maramba (bass, bowed bass), Nita Scott (additional drums, perc), Laurel Halo (effects, synths, additional vocals), Actress (synths, effects, additional production), Natalie Mering (vocals), Amelia Meath (vocals), Nick Sanborn (acoustic guitar), Destani Wolfe (backing vocals), Animal Collective (vocals, synths), Toki Monsta (effects), Lias Saoudi (vocals), Nathan Saoudi (Juno, backing vocals), Jack Everett (acoustic drums, backing vocals), Adam J Harmer (guitar, backing vocals), Dev Hynes (acoustic guitar), Tei Shi (vocals), Matt Fish (cello), Ian Walker (double bass), Eric Gorfain, Daphne Chen, Marissa Kuney, Jenny Takamatsu (violins), Caroline Buckman, Leah Katz, Rodney Wirtz (violas)

notes. Even so, it’s the most difficult piece here, as much sound design as song, seven minutes long and positioned up front as track two.

Later in the record, “The Legal Status Of Ice”, featuring Fat White Family and first performed live by Cale and his band pre-pandemic, demonstrates just how far-out Cale is determined to go. It begins as industrial trip-hop with a one-note vocal line and a hip-hop-inspired “*pour that liquor out*” refrain, before transitioning into brilliant mutant dancehall with descending chords, droning synths and a spitting drum machine. Cabaret Voltaire were inspired by the churn of the Velvets, and here it sounds like Cale is returning the favour.

While Fat White Family’s grubby fingerprints are pretty faint, that’s testament to just how involved Cale is with every facet of *Mercy*: he plays almost every instrument, with collaborators generally credited with “additional” roles. Weyes Blood’s Natalie Mering is the most obvious contributor, joining Cale on the bad-trip R&B of “Story Of Blood” – her solemn, deep voice occasionally has an air of Nico about it here, which can’t have escaped Cale’s attention.

Two tracks on, he turns to more obvious consideration of his old collaborator on

“Moonstruck (Nico’s Song)”, a hyperpop ballad with queasy, unreal strings and a tender refrain about a “*moonstruck junkie lady*”. As two chords seesaw over an endless sequenced bassline, Cale’s processed vocals mass as he pays a bruised tribute: “*I have come to make my peace...*” You imagine the song’s subject would have particularly enjoyed the sub-bass rumble that subsumes the track in its final minute.

It’s not the only time Cale weaves his history into the record either. The video for “Night Crawling”, *Mercy*’s first single and its most accessible track by a mile, depicts an animated Cale and Bowie cruising around New York’s nightspots, as they did in real life. It’s the only track here that could have fitted on *Shifty Adventures...*, and it shows how far Cale’s come in the past decade. Amid the electronic *sturm und drang*, there are musical references to his past too, such as the hymnal chord changes in the middle section of “Time Stands Still”, reminiscent of one of his stately ’70s storytelling ballads, such as *Fear*’s “Buffalo Ballet”. Elsewhere, the piano intro to “Story Of Blood” is almost identical to the verse melody of that same record’s centrepiece, “Gun”.

Lyrically, he’s in typically opaque form, whether building a song around a handful

unequal relationship, the narrator glumly coming to terms with the fact their partner is only content “*when I’m sad*”.

The final track, one of *Mercy*’s strongest, finds some hope amid references to suicide and despair. “*If you jump out your window/I will break your fall/I’ll hold you close and keep you calm/Wherever you decide to go*”, sings Cale over metronomic piano that’s not unlike the musician’s pounding accompaniment on the Velvets’ “I’m Waiting For The Man”. Here, instead of being violent and physical, it’s brutal in a different way: mechanised, relentless and shrouded in thick reverb. At times like this, *Mercy* recalls the digital distortion of Low’s *Double Negative*, the clipped onslaught creating its own beauty.

As “Everlasting Days” degrades into claustrophobic drum and bass, with Animal Collective’s vocals cut-up and pitch-shifted, we’re reminded of Bowie’s *Blackstar*, not only sonically, but in its creator’s audacity and boundless enthusiasm for the new, the strange, the disconcerting. If this were to be the last we hear from Cale – and let’s hope there’s more to come – he’d at least be departing on a triumph, with an uncompromising, thoroughly modern trip into the twilight, to places where even his collaborators and acolytes would fear to tread. Rage, rage.

HOW TO BUY...

{SHIFTY ADVENTURES AND MORE...}

John Cale’s road to *Mercy*



BLACKACETATE

EMI, 2005

2003’s *HoboSapiens* was strong, but this was Cale’s best in decades, a dynamic, experimental exercise in guitar-driven rock. “In A Flood” is his brilliant take on Americana, complete with slide guitar, Dylan phrasing and spare Fender Rhodes, while “Sold Motel” is greasy grunge the way only Cale could do it. **8/10**



SHIFTY ADVENTURES IN NOOKIE WOOD

DOUBLESIX, 2012

Dystopian funk was the name of the game here: a departure of sorts at the time, but compared with *Mercy*, *Shifty Adventures...* today sounds shockingly breezy and commercial. Perhaps a sign of Cale, not for the first instance, being way ahead of his time. **8/10**



M:FANS

DOUBLESIX/DOMINO, 2016

This reworking of 1982’s *Music For A New Society* allowed Cale to ‘correct’ one of his most legendary and controversial albums. Buzzsaw synths and drum machines carry these spare meditations, while “Prelude” reinstates a touching phone call between the musician and his parents. “*M:FANS* is really what I wanted the original to be,” he told *Uncut* in 2016. **8/10**

nonesuch



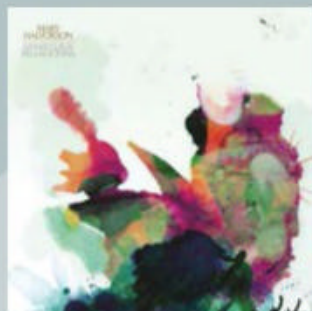
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THE BLACK KEYS
Dropout Boogie

'Exhilarating. Rock'n'roll in 2022 doesn't get any better than this.'

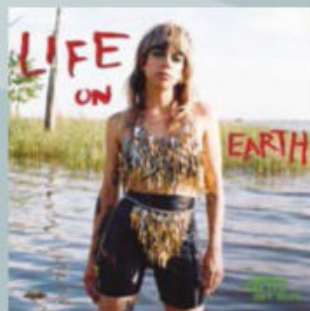
– Classic Rock, 9/10



MARY HALVORSON
Amaryllis & Belladonna

'The singular Halvorson is a guitarist whose innovations have blurred the boundaries between jazz, the avant-garde, rock and noise music. She makes her debut on Nonesuch with two contrasting and spectacular new albums. Both are stunning examples of her unique approach to guitar playing.'

– Record Collector ★★★★★



HURRAY FOR THE RIFF RAFF
Life on Earth

'A major step forward for one of today's most vital artists. The first great album of 2022.'

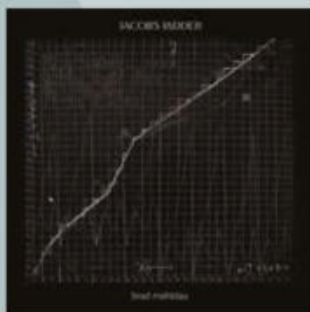
– Uncut, Albums Of The Year



TAJ MAHAL & RY COODER
Get on Board

'Now 79 and 74 respectively, Mahal and Cooder are giving back here like so often before. As they revive and curate earthy, animated songs by Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, there is clearly love in the room.'

– Mojo, Albums of the Year



BRAD MEHLDAU
Jacob's Ladder

'Relish a unique contemporary musician's ingenious mingling of a traditional and contemporary sound palette, with plenty of characteristically freewheeling jazz detours on the way.'

– Guardian, Jazz Album of the Month

★★★★★



PUNCH BROTHERS
Hell on Church Street

'Both Tony Rice and *Church Street Blues* were huge influences on bluegrass mavericks Punch Brothers, so they re-recorded the album in tribute. They have done him proud. Where Rice played it pretty straight with the material, Punch Brothers, as is their wont, decided to be more adventurous. Rice would have loved it.'

– Mojo ★★★★★



JOSHUA REDMAN, BRAD MEHLDAU, CHRISTIAN MCBRIDE & BRIAN BLADE
Long Gone

'The years fall away as the timeless music the great Joshua Redman Quartet make together falls back into place.'

– BBC Music Magazine ★★★★★



ENSEMBLE INTERCONTEMPORAIN & GEORGE JACKSON
Steve Reich: Reich/Richter

'Few artists maintain quality into advanced old age, but Reich's mastery seems undimmed.'

– The Wire



CÉCILE McLORIN SALVANT
Ghost Song

'One of the most daring and resourceful vocalists in jazz – or any other genre, for that matter.'

– Uncut, 8/10



CAROLINE SHAW & ATTACCA QUARTET
Evergreen

'Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Caroline Shaw continues to make waves with her imaginative and expressive works that glide effortlessly between genres.'

– BBC Music Magazine ★★★★★



MOLLY TUTTLE & GOLDEN HIGHWAY
Crooked Tree

'Bluegrass's young Californian trailblazer needs no supporting cast, but this LP with her new bluegrass collective Golden Highway is a dazzling pass-the-parcel of Nashville cats showboating. Its fine songs take precedence though. Everything sounds alive, vital and perfectly in focus.'

– Mojo, Albums of the Year ★★★★★



WILCO
Yankee Hotel Foxtrot
(Super Deluxe Edition)

'America's greatest band. The album has always been a Wilco landmark. This new monolithic reissue restates the case that it's still their most crucial record, opening the way to everything they've done since. A cast-iron rock classic.'

– Uncut, Reissues of the Year, 10/10



MEG BAIRD

Furling

DRAG CITY

9/10

Best yet from unsung psych-folk stalwart.
By Sam Richards

IT'S 20 years now since Meg Baird co-founded Espers in her home city of Philadelphia. With Baird sharing lead vocals with Greg Weeks, the band became a mainstay of New Weird America, striking a noble balance between psychedelic exploration and deference to the set texts of folk-rock. Espers fizzled out amicably in 2010, by which point Baird had already embarked on a solo career. However, lacking the extrovert quality of peers like Devendra Banhart and Joanna Newsom, Baird has always flown somewhat under the radar.

All-acoustic debut *Dear Companion* (2007) seemed to suggest she was happiest reinterpreting folk standards; even the two original compositions on that record cleaved closely to the form. But since then, there's been an ever-so-gradual evolution in her songwriting

and a broadening of her vision. *Furling* finally feels like the full blossoming of a long-hinted-at talent.

Whereas the credits for 2011's *Seasons On Earth* read like a who's who of the Philly underground – Chris Forsyth, Steve Gunn, Mary Lattimore – pretty much everything on *Furling* is played by Baird, who now resides in the far north of California, and her partner Charlie Saufley. But as the duo's contributions to psych-folk supergroup Heron Oblivion prove, they can do noisy and expansive as well as hushed and reverent. What's new is a kind of rich, jazz-adjacent warmth, reminiscent of The Weather Station's *Ignorance* or Joni Mitchell's *Hejira*. A couple of songs are led by piano instead of guitar, with a bonus dusting of vibraphone. Her drums,

though slow and simple, are more prominent than before, lending the music a steady flow, and occasionally even something approaching a groove.

Baird is so confident in this new mode that opener "Ashes, Ashes" shimmers and swirls

luxuriously for six minutes without the 'song' beginning at all; there's just her gorgeous wordless vocal, dividing itself in two, then two again, creating some dazzling harmonic patterns. As the coda of "Twelve Saints" confirms, harmonising with yourself rather than others can create a unique resonance, a slightly disquieting closeness Baird exploits to stunning effect.

Baird's professed obsession with David Roback manifests itself on "Star Hill Song", which sounds a lot like prime Mazzy Star. Hear how she subtly layers three separate guitar parts – an acoustic strum, a vaguely country-ish lead and a Spanish background shimmer, plus brushed drums and a lazy tambourine – to create an instant tableau of twilight romantic regret.

While the music marks a subtle progression through life, the lyrics tally up what's been lost – the inevitable but still painful cost of living. "Early one evening, just call out my name/And you'll see it's not the same any more" run the final lines of "Cross Bay", which reinstates a more familiar style, Baird singing high and defiantly fragile over fingerpicked acoustic guitar like perennial touchstone Vashti Bunyan. But the song's indelible melody and flurry of unexpected chords at the end underline an increased confidence in her songwriting powers.



What's new here is a kind of rich, jazz-adjacent warmth

Baird claims she's never played vibes before, but sitting there in the studio, it proved impossible to resist ("Especially being such a huge Tim Buckley fan," she says, "there was no way I wasn't going to at least see what it sounded like."). Tim Green's Louder Studios, in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains, turned out to be an inspirational location all-round; festooned with fallen branches, it feels like you're recording in a forest glade. On one occasion, Baird and Green even pulled the microphone cords outside to capture the sound of the local treefrogs, credited on the album as 'The Grass Valley Ghost Pine Chorus'.

But unlike those early Espers albums, *Furling* doesn't attempt to play up its wyrd, mystical qualities. The emotion on display feels very upfront, whether it's the blissful realisations of "Will You Follow Me Home?" – "Someone likes me, someone loves me!" – or the sad acceptance of living with death on the album's final track, "Wreathing Days". It's a straightforward piano-and-vocal affair, but the way the chord pattern suddenly brightens halfway through, as if providing a shoulder to cry on, is breathtaking.

Baird says she forced herself to write songs with more structure and movement, to avoid making the same record over and over again. By doing so, she's brought feelings to the surface that previously she may have kept veiled. It feels like a significant breakthrough.

SLEEVE NOTES

- 1 Ashes, Ashes
- 2 Star Hill Song
- 3 Ship Captains
- 4 Cross Bay
- 5 Twelve Saints
- 6 Unnamed
- Drives
- 7 The Saddest
- Verses
- 8 Will You Follow Me Home?
- 9 Wreathing Days

Produced by: Meg Baird and Charlie Saufley
Recorded at: Louder Studios, Grass Valley, California; Panoramic Studios, Stinson Beach, California
Personnel includes: Meg Baird (vocals, acoustic and electric guitars, piano, drums, percussion, vibraphone, Mellotron, analogue synth, organs), Charlie Saufley (acoustic and electric guitars, bass, drums, percussion, analogue synth), Mary Lattimore (harp), Tim Green (treated piano, field recordings)

This means she's also able to provide ample consolation for those creeping midlife crises. "*Blossoms falling down/ Sometimes it's better than being found*", she sings, as "Ship Captains" transitions expertly from chilly, uncertain verse to warm, enveloping chorus. "*We'll make it alright again*".

The vibraphone returns on "Twelve Saints", shadowing acoustic guitars that drip with silvery reverb and melancholy.

Q&A

Meg Baird: "Everything becomes more beautiful and more sad"

There's a strong sense of wistfulness and loss on this album. Is that something you feel more keenly as you get older? Oh yeah, of course. Everything becomes more beautiful and more sad. You do lose more and more people closer and closer to you, it's just a fact of how things go. So there's a fair bit of memorialising in this record. And the bulk of it was written and recorded prior to the 'shelter in place' orders [of the pandemic] so it was almost like a vessel that kept absorbing even more of that.

On the other hand it sounds like you were having fun in the studio, pulling out the shakers and the claves... Yeah, it was very fun. Sometimes my music might not seem that fun! But that's not necessarily reflective of my mood or the other music I listen to. So it was nice to have a chance to explore that in the studio.

Do you have any expectations for how this album might be received? I don't think about it quite in market terms. But if I had any aspiration, it would be that there was more attention [on the fact] that I do play all these instruments, that I'm very experienced and adept in the studio – I create a sound. I don't come out and say, "I'm a producer and a composer", so it can be an assumption that I'm just singing and playing guitar, and that the music almost comes out magically. But I think that if you know the vocals and the drums and everything else are being performed by the same person, it does something interesting to your mental picture of the music.

So how are you performing it live, when you can't play everything yourself? I knew that I wouldn't be recreating the studio sound onstage, but I had to have the confidence that there'd be a way to present it. And it's been going really well, playing with Ryan Jewell [drums] and Doug McCombs [bass] and Charlie. We just toured the East Coast and we're gonna do the West Coast soon. No plans [for Europe] yet, but that would be great. **INTERVIEW: SAM RICHARDS**

AtoZ

This month...

- P24 GUIDED BY VOICES
- P26 GAZ COOMBS
- P28 WHITEHORSE
- P29 LADYTRON
- P30 KALIMALONE
- P34 HC McENTIRE
- P35 DAVE ROWNTREE

ABRACADABRA

Shapes & Colors

MELODIC

7/10

Bay Area duo find playful new noises in the post-punk avant-funk toybox



Oakland-based duo Hannah Skelton and Chris Niles weave a rhythmically rich, junk-shop art-pop DIY racket using

vintage synthesisers, woozy vocals, congas, cowbells and more. The fusion of post-punk, Afro-funk and tropical percussion elements on their second album inevitably invokes vintage Talking Heads and Tom Tom Club, especially on the semi-rapped, booty-shaking number "At The Zoo". Welcome hints of prickly sarcasm counter all this sunny sweetness, notably the blank-voiced disdain of "Don't Like U", while more dub-infused tracks like "Impactor" could almost be Stereolab mixed by King Tubby. For all its knowingly retro signifiers, *Shapes & Colors* bristles with contemporary freshness and wonky charm. **STEPHEN DALTON**

ASHTRAY NAVIGATIONS

The Apotheosis Of VaVaVoom

VHF

8/10

Underground lifers essay a frazzled, delirious psych-rock gem



It's wild to think Leeds's Ashtray Navigations have been around for over three decades now, piloted through

their existence by éminence grise of the British underground, Phil Todd. They've long specialised in a peculiar kind of psychedelia, embracing both trashiness and transcendence, revelation and rough-housing joy. As with most recent Ashtray Navigations albums, *The Apotheosis Of VaVaVoom* is pleasingly wide in its remit – the fearsome, cranked guitar-blast of opener "Irons Three" gives way to the slow-moving electronic thresh-work of "Tasteful Grey Putting"; "Hinges On The Clapometer" is like Manuel Göttsching trapped and tormented by his own patch bays. **JONDALE**



GBV, 2022: (l-r) Kevin March, Doug Gillard, Robert Pollard, Mark Shue, Bobby Bare Jr

GUIDED BY VOICES

La La Land

GBV INC

8/10

Robert Pollard's voracious musical appetite continues its remarkable run with GBV's 14th album since 2017. *By Peter Watts*



SINCE making their second comeback in 2017, Guided By Voices have continued to record at a vicious lick while maintaining standards of quality control that seem frankly unreal. *La La Land* is their 14th album since the band's return, and they're all good – sometimes great. Perhaps Robert Pollard learnt from the previous comeback between 2010 and 2014, a “classic lineup” reunion that never really delivered on the goodwill. When that fell apart, it seemed like the end of the road. In 2016, Pollard brought out a Guided By Voices album called *Please Be Honest*, which featured him playing every instrument. That didn't really work either. So Pollard, who is nothing if not persistent, tried again, this time recruiting a band that included old hands Doug Gillard and Kevin March on guitar and drums respectively, with accomplished newbies Mark Shue on bass and Bobby Bare Jr on second guitar. This time, it gelled. And how.

The new lineup are everything that people love about GBV – eclectic, quirky, provocative, melodic, clever, unexpected – but with greater depth and texture and a more pronounced sense of mischief. Their productivity is unparalleled, beginning with 2017's *August By Cake*,

SLEEVE NOTES

- 1 Another Day To Heal
- 2 Released Into Dementia
- 3 Ballroom Etiquette
- 4 Insect Dwelling
- 5 Queen Of Spaces
- 6 Slowly On The Wheel
- 7 Cousin Jackie
- 8 Wild Kingdom
- 9 Caution Song
- 10 Face Eraser
- 11 Pockets

Produced by: Travis Harrison
Recorded at: Serious Business Music, New York
Personnel: Robert Pollard (vocals), Doug Gillard (guitar), Bobby Bare Jr (guitar), Mark Shue (bass), Kevin March (drums)

an exuberant double. Of their 14 releases, two are doubles and another, 2019's *Warp And Woof*, had 24 tracks, nearly all of which came in at around 90 seconds or less. While 2017's sparkling *How Do You Spell Heaven* and 2019's heavy-rocking *Zeppelin Over China* are probably the best, they are all worth your time. Sure, there's no “Motor Away” or “Game Of Pricks” from the glory days but every album has a mood and two or three special moments: there's the skronky title track from 2018's *Space Gun*, the ace '90s throwback “My Wrestling Days Are Over” from 2019's *Sweating The Plague*, the power pop marvel “My (Limited) Engagement” from 2021's *It's Not Them...* or the epic “Who Wants To Go Hunting?” from last year's superb *Tremblers And Goggles By Rank*.

La La Land picks up where that album – their second of 2022 – left off. That means “longer songs... more adventurous structures”, as Pollard tells *Uncut*. It's exemplified by the six-minute centrepiece “Slowly On The Wheel”. Pollard manages to pack plenty of twists into even a 90-second song, so six minutes of GBV brings mondo hyperactivity, with the song starting from a minimalist single-chord solo and ending in a blaze of stadium rock

thunder. In between comes jangle, heavy metal and eastern chord progressions. It's followed by the equally fluid “Cousin Jackie”, which sounds like Zeppelin doing doo wop, has the album's most delirious vocal and boasts a delightful portfolio of drumming from March, who like the rest of the band has to demonstrate consistency within a versatile framework.

Both these tracks, like the best bits of *Tremblers...*, sound like The Who's wilder psych-pop symphonies – but if you don't like that, hang around a minute or three and GBV will have something else to offer. Opener “Another Day To Heal” (the only sub-two-minute song) and “Face Eraser” bring a jerky punk-like energy, while “Ballroom Etiquette” is all about the REM jangle – plus a lyric that nonchalantly drops the word “fastidious” into a catchy waltz (“I just like the sound of the word,” admits Pollard). “Released Into Dementia” has some of The Flaming Lips's lysergic drawl, while “Instinct Dwelling” has an intro that sounds very much like the start of Queen's “Flash's Theme” before developing into a similarly ominous march. Later, the genteel thrash of “Wild Kingdom” gives way to ballad “Caution Song”, one of the few songs where you can almost anticipate what is going to come next. “Who wants a sad song these days?” asks Pollard on a lyric that otherwise comes across like Dada Morrissey.

Pollard's lyrics are often abstruse but with memorable lines and a perverse rhythmic charm like the opening to “Instinct Dweller” with its “crypto woman” and “thermometer child”. Pollard's love of wordplay concludes with “Pockets”, which explores all the different types of pocket, from pool tables to pockets of resistance to places “to cram a jammed fingered glove”. It's a wonderful example of Pollard's ability to write a song about almost anything, taking a melody or concept and running with it, and then doing it again, and again, and again, over and over, with spirit-raising results. The one after this will be called *Welshpool Frillies*, by the way.

Q&A

Bob Pollard: “It's like making a collage”

What are the strengths of this band? An uncanny ability to assimilate every nuance, including mistakes, of my rough demos into their interpretive contributions. Ninety percent of the time it's right on to what I expect or blows me away even further. They're fast and efficient. I do the vocals in about three hours.

Is there any time or place you can't write a song? No. At least not an idea for a song. When I'm out drinking or whatever I always have someone recording my outbursts and ramblings. Sometimes the ideas are interesting and sometimes ridiculous, but I don't worry or think about it. That's the secret. I write when I feel inspired and then I let go with as many ideas as I can. Fragments, sections, full songs, whatever. I use a guitar, boombox, notebook and pen. After I have what I think may be enough material I transfer everything to a CD and start moving things around. It's like

making a collage. I use most of everything. I'd say 85 per cent. The stuff I discard might show up later.

Does being so prolific have any drawbacks or is it all good? It wears people out and they say, “Fuck it, I can't keep up”, and I understand that, but when they bail they're gonna miss out on the few gems. I personally think they're all gems or I wouldn't put them on the album. They're obviously not all hits or instant classics, but they serve their purpose to create diversity within each album.

INTERVIEW: PETER WATTS



Bob Pollard

MEHMET ASLAN

The Sun Is Parallel

PLANISPHEREEDITORIAL

6/10

Swiss-Turkish crate-digging connoisseur serves up a culturally and sonically rich debut



A Berlin-based, Basel-raised DJ and producer of Turkish heritage, Mehmet Aslan brings an alluringly broad cultural and musical hinterland to this long-gestating debut album. Augmented with live instrumentation and guest vocalists, most of these tracks are dance-adjacent and club-friendly while also drawing on krautrock, orchestral funk, trip-hop, acid house and more. Featuring drummer Valentina Magaletti of Vanishing Twin, “Garden” is a dazzling tapestry of avant-jazz textures, while “Domo” layers Turkish psych-rock jangles over crunchy mid-tempo breakbeats. A few minor numbers feel padded out, but Aslan’s stylistic and sonic range is consistently impressive.

STEPHENDALTON

THE BAD ENDS

The Power And The Glory

NEW WEST

9/10

Life-affirming songs about death and dying



The Bad Ends qualify as an Athens supergroup, and not just because they include two local legends. Mike

Mantione (of the long-running act Five Eight) and Bill Berry (in his first full-time band since leaving REM 25 years ago) tap into a familiar strain of jangle rock for a set of inventive songs about growing old and dying in a small college town with a big music legacy. *The Power & The Glory* never sounds morose; even when he’s singing a downer line like “All your friends are dying one by one” Mantione invests the sentiment with immense compassion and concern.

STEPHENDUSNER

BASS DRUM OF DEATH

Say I Won't

FATPOSSUM

8/10

John Barrett enlists his touring band and Pat Carney for punchy fifth



Bursting with raw energy and renewed vigour, Bass Drum of Death’s fifth album is a product of the many good moves

spurred by John Barrett’s pandemic-inspired return to Oxford, Mississippi, starting with the decision to make a record with his touring band for the first time rather than go it alone in the studio. As captured by Pat Carney in Nashville, the 12 new songs on *Say I Won't* demonstrates Barrett’s flair for tight, economical rockers like the

Gena Rose Bruce



kind that once blasted out of transistor AM radios. While “Keys To The City” and “Swerving” see Barrett equip his signature brand of garage-punk with chewy bubblegum centres, “Everybody’s Gonna Be There” could be the greatest Ramones song Johnny never wrote.

JASON ANDERSON

BEATS & PIECES

BIG BAND

Good Days

EPFI

7/10

Arranger for Goldie, Laura Mvulu and the Heritage Orchestra delves into Brit-jazz



Ben Cottrell’s 14-piece draw heavily on the American big band tradition – from Count Basie to the Art Ensemble of Chicago

– but can’t help but be deeply infected by a strain of English melancholy. “Elegy” is a woozy, slow-motion ballad that conjures up images of a beautifully misty, rain-soaked countryside; “Woody” is a traditional New Orleans-style freakout which ends on the “Day In The Life” chord, while tracks like the herky-jerky “Blues For Linu”, the Rhodes-led “Wait” and the free improv of “DB” invoke everything from Keith Tippett’s Centipede to Loose Tubes, via trip-hop and northern brass bands.

JOHNLEWIS

TYONDAI BRAXTON

Telekinesis

NONESUCH

7/10

Studio recording of 87-piece modernist symphony from former math-rock wunderkind



Since his departure from Battles in 2010, Tyondai Braxton has established himself as a composer – albeit, one of a modernist,

forward-thinking bent. *Telekinesis* is a mark of his distinct style, a piece for electric guitar, orchestra, choir and electronics that Braxton debuted in London in 2018. Recorded here with The Metropolis Ensemble and Brooklyn Youth Chorus, it feels like a meeting of worlds – the bubbly experimental electronics Braxton brought to Battles meets the orchestral dissonance of 20th-century composers such as György Ligeti. Apparently, *Telekinesis* grew out of Braxton’s intent to write an opera of the Japanese anime Akira; based on this, that’d be something to witness.

LOUISPATTISON

GENA ROSE BRUCE

Deep Is The Way

DOTDASH

7/10

Full-blooded pop-rock with a twist



Self-doubt, existential despair and grief’s fallout are at the heart of this Australian singer-songwriter’s second album, but

so too are hope and self-acceptance. Her rich, darkly romantic artistry recalls Angel Olsen and Weyes Blood (on “I’m Not Made To Love Only You” and “Captive”, respectively), while Bill Callahan duets on the country-swinging title track, one of two of his co-writes here. If crystalline piano ballad “Love” is unconvincing, it’s one blip in a set that throws things intriguingly off course with “I’d Rather Be A Dreamer” and “Harsh Light”. Both nod to ’70s soft rock and, rather than novelty indulgence, are evidence of Bruce’s outside-the-box approach.

SHARON O’CONNELL

BURIAL

Streetlands

HYPERDUB

7/10

Ambient explorations from the dark horse of dubstep



In recent years, the mysterious William Bevan has drifted away from the lonely, rain-sodden spin on UK garage with

which he established the Burial name, instead relocating his music to occupy a sort of translucent ambience. The three tracks presented here are all about feel, their swooning synths and nocturnal atmospheres wreathed in that ever-present vinyl crackle. It’s hard not to lament the absence of those shunting rhythms, which once felt so central; but Bevan’s music has never sounded more like a comfort blanket than it does on the title track, its shimmering choral swells treated with a cathedral reverb that feels positively ecclesiastical.

LOUISPATTISON

THE CIA

Surgery Channel

INTHERED

6/10

Scuzzy second from Mr & Mrs Segall



Just the three albums this year from Ty Segall, who follows *Hello, Hi* and his *Whirlybird* soundtrack with *Surgery Channel*,

another airless slab of drum-machine filth and buzzsaw riffs from The CIA, the band fronted by his wife Denée, with Emmett Kelly on bass and synths. Mixing industrial electronics with new wave nihilism, these are short,

sharp, slightly demented nuggets that convey with clinical precision a sense of anxiety and paranoia, Denée Segall’s sneer on “Better” and “Imperonator” reminiscent of Adult’s Nicola Kuperus. Add a couple of curveballs – dulcet ballad “Under”, “Construct”’s analogue carnage – for an uneven, ugly set that’s still weirdly compelling.

PIERSMARTIN

CLIMAX GOLDEN TWINS

Climax Golden Twins

FIREBREATHING TURTLE

7/10

One of the USA’s weirdest, most capricious groups, back on top form



This long-running Seattle duo are obtuse, confusing, often inscrutable – and that’s their charm. It’s no huge

surprise to discover they exist, very loosely, within the orbit of the similarly confounding Sun City Girls, but the Twins have their own thing going on, a strange brew of Morricone-esque flourishes, hypnotic kraut-drone cuts, fried avant-rock improvisations, home-brewed musique concrète, often within the same song. That kind of variety makes *Climax Golden Twins*, their first full-length in 14 years, such a thrill – it’s unpredictable and creatively warped. And somehow, they manage to sound like no-one else.

JONDALE

CoH MEETS ABUL MOGARD

CoH Meets Abul Mogard

HOUNDSTOOTH

8/10

Experimental electronic collab from underground figures



Abul Mogard’s one-time backstory was that he was a Serbian ex-factory worker who made experimental electronic music

during his retirement. That’s now been revealed to be a construct of the artist Guido Zen, who here teams up with Ivan Pavlov’s CoH moniker. The result is an album of deeply intense dark ambient, industrial electronica, pulsing drones and a tone that veers from doom-laden to almost euphoric. Despite the static hisses and eerie clangs that make up most of the album, the final track “Find And Hold” is a strangely comforting, almost serene wind down that hits home the vast breadth of sonic terrain covered on the album.

DANIEL DYLAN WRAY



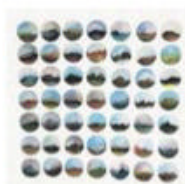
Fretparty: supergroup The Bad Ends

COMPLETE MOUNTAIN ALMANAC

BELLA UNION

8/10

Meditative debut from duo with a little help from The National



A collaboration between Nordic singer and composer Rebekka Karijord and poet and multimedia artist Jessica Dessner,

these dozen tracks named after the months of the year were initially conceived as a suite about climate change and the cycle of nature. Shortly after they began, Dessner was diagnosed with breast cancer and the lyrics deepened to reflect her own internal healing process. The results are an intense juxtaposition of the intimate and the universal framed in beguiling chamber-folk arrangements, with Jessica's twin brothers Aaron and Bryce Dessner co-producing and adding guitars and exquisite string arrangements to Karijord's euphonic voice on six of the tracks.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

GAZ COOMBES Turn The Car Around

HOT FRUIT/VIRGIN MUSIC

8/10

The Oxford don shifts up another gear



In contrast to the adrenalin rush of Supergrass's recent reunion shows, Coombes' fourth is cultivated and

considered, its detailed arrangements illuminated by Ian Davenport's muscular production. Raucous stomper "Long Live The Strange" might suit his 'day job', but "Don't Say It's Over" accentuates the yearning in an occasionally Thom Yorke-like voice, while a Radiohead affinity is further evident in "Feel Loop (Lizard Dream)"'s resolute confidence. He's as assured, too, on "Overnight Trains", exploiting his lower register before an epic 'Big Music' climax, and similarly grand aspirations are fulfilled with "Sonny The Strong"'s Springsteen narrative and "Not The Only Thing"'s increasingly affecting drama.

WYNDHAM WALLACE

THE CORAL SEA Golden Planet Sky

TREES THEY MOVE

6/10

Fragile melodrama from LA via Italy and Mexico



There's no doubting Rey Villalobos's sincerity on his seventh album. He's best on quieter songs, his parched,

feminine vocal summoning early Sparklehorse on the creaking, shadowy "Run Into The Arms Of Fear" and "Raincoat", its bridge distinguished by understated saxophone. Antique brass on "Peace Of Mind" and "Eyes So Black" sometimes suggest a familiarity with early Lambchop, but "Your Feathers Up" is more urgent, falling little short of a Broken Social Scene jam. If Radiohead were sued for "Creep", however, Villalobos might want to keep Mike Hazlewood and Albert Hammond's lawyers away from "Love Is No Sacrifice".

WYNDHAM WALLACE

CARLA DAL FORNO Come Around

KALLISTA

6/10

Mysterious almost-pop from Castlemaine, Victoria - songs as vacant stares



Itinerant singer-songwriter Carla Dal Forno has quietly released several under-the-radar, avant-pop albums in recent times, tracking, abstractly, her life through Berlin, London, then back home to Australia. On *Come Around*, she's at her best when everything's distilled to essence - see the ghostly, spectral "Stay Awake". The aesthetic coordinates are clear, as Dal Forno's referential by nature - Broadcast, Lachelle and The Kiwi Animal would all seem to loom large here; she also covers psych-pop pioneers The United States Of America. But while it's sometimes a little too precious or studied, there's plenty of beautifully blank melody here, too.

JONDALE

SARAH DAVACHI In Concert & In Residence

LATE MUSIC

8/10

Odds'n'sods of the most transcendent type



Being a fan of Sarah Davachi's work is a treat: not only does the Los Angeles-based Canadian make excellent

records such as 2022's varied *Two Sisters*, she frequently puts out additional releases, appendices of sorts, on Bandcamp or CD. Her latest live compilation is two and a half hours of pastoral, lyrical drones: "In The Grand Luxe Hall", with cello and two EMS synths, is a jarring, engrossing opener, and the four-part "Lower Visions" finds Davachi solo with a variety of proto-synthesisers, while her "Harmonies..." pipe organ studies hark back to 2020's sublime *Cantus, Descant*.

TOM PINNOCK

DEZRON DOUGLAS Atalaya

INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM

8/10

New York bassist takes a backseat to his band



Bassist Dezron Douglas has accompanied big stars like Pharoah Sanders, Ravi Coltrane and Trey Anastasio, but aside from the FX-laden solo piece "Octopus", he's happy to let his bandmates shine. Drummer Joe Dyson Jr negotiates the disorientating 13/8 time signature on the Jan Garbarek-ish title track, but also replicates the sound of the lapping sea on "Jones Beach"; pianist George Burton is in particularly rippling form on the tango "Foligno". But the star is saxophonist Emilio Modeste, whether he's playing soprano on the pretty jazz waltz "Rosé" or tenor freakouts on the more episodic pieces such as "Luna Moth".

JOHN LEWIS

Top 'grass:
Gaz Coombes



FIELD GUIDE

Field Guide BIRTHDAY CAKE

7/10

Canadian conveys hearth-like warmth on second



"I wanna talk to you more gently", Dylan MacDonald sings on "In Love Now", James Taylor a model for romantic reveries

verging on solipsism, M Ward for the crafted, vintage sound-world. Initial sessions were taped around a wood stove in icy Manitoba, perhaps inspiring the huddled closeness and MacDonald's soft, honeyed growl. These aching ballads are absorbed into rich arrangements, steel guitar whining in solitary counterpoint, "Tupperware (Reimagined)" an airy instrumental weave. Somewhere between soft rock and woody Americana, familiarity helps the spell.

NICK HASTED

FRAN Leaving

8/10

How did I get here? asks Chicago singer-songwriter Maria Jacobson



On her second album under the name Fran, Maria Jacobson constantly traces her steps backwards, as though figuring out

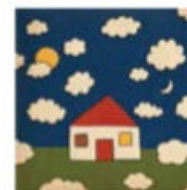
how she got to this particular moment. "How did I open the window?" she asks not quite rhetorically on "How Did I", which follows a song called "How Did We". She sings with the deadpan of Aimee Mann, which underscores the eccentricity of her lyrics and gestures toward a darkness she can't put into words. Fortunately, a loose crew of Chicago musicians inject a lush '70s lustre into her worries about the end of the world and the departure of a lover.

STEPHEN DEUSNER

JW FRANCIS Dream House

6/10

New York lo-fi fave gets his Valentine's heart on



As if JW Francis didn't seem amiable enough already based on the sunny contents of 2021's *Wanderkid*, the New

York bedroom-pop maker is also remarkably amenable to fulfilling fan requests for Valentine's Day tributes for their loved ones. For his third album, Francis refines and reworks some of his favourite examples since starting this holiday tradition. While "I Wanna Be Your Basketball" and "Sweet As A Rose" make for satisfying power-pop, *Dream House*'s title track and "All Night Long" evoke Mac DeMarco at his wooziest and wobbiest. Lest it all get too sweet, the Feelies-worthy "Keep It Cool, Steve" highlights the nervier tensions underlying the sentiments here. JASON ANDERSON

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| FRI 3 | NORTHAMPTON ROADMENDER | MON 13 | ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL |
| SAT 4 | CARDIFF TRAMSHED | TUE 14 | GLASGOW ST LUKES |
| MON 6 | NORWICH WATERFRONT | THU 16 | NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY |
| TUE 7 | LIVERPOOL O2 ACADEMY | FRI 17 | MANCHESTER ACADEMY |
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| 19/04/23 | SHEFFIELD THE LEADMILL | 27/04/23 | BRIGHTON CONCORDE 2 |
| 21/04/23 | BIRMINGHAM THE MILL | 28/04/23 | BRISTOL SWX |
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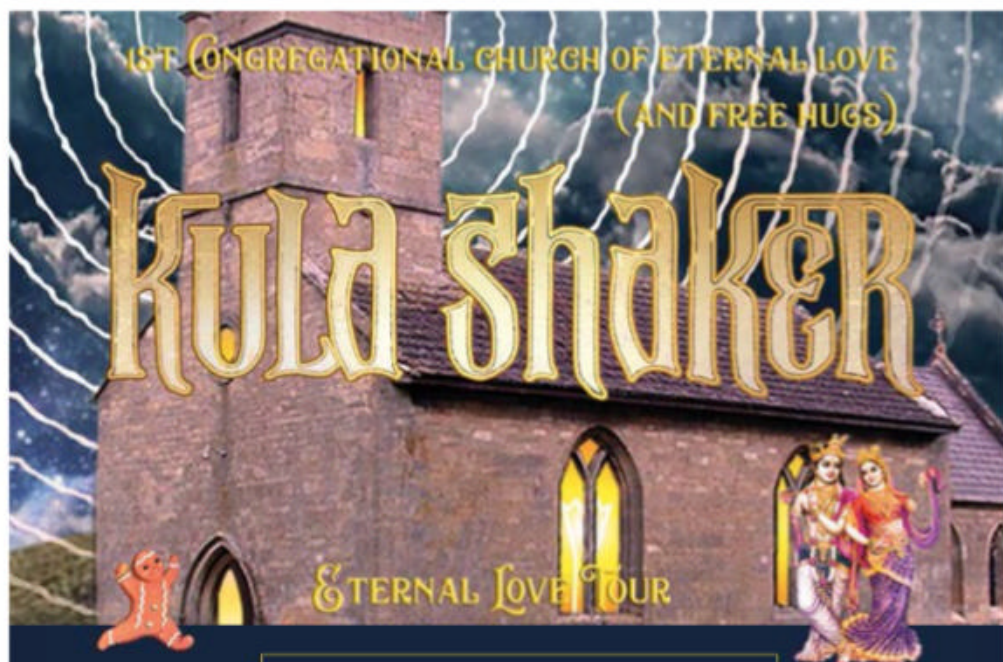
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{ AMERICANA }

Album of the month



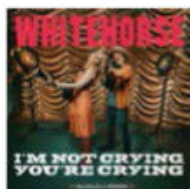
WHITEHORSE

I'm Not Crying, You're Crying

SIX SHOOTER

8/10

Canadian duo summon the ghosts of countrypolitan's past



PRIOR to forming Whitehorse in 2010, married couple Melissa McClelland and Luke Doucet had each made a string of singer-songwriterly albums that followed all manner of musical directions. Both also had a shared history in Sarah McLachlan's band, while Doucet was, for a time, leader of Vancouver indie-rock types Veal. The varied stylistic elements of their work seemed to find an ideal home in the fluid sensibility of Whitehorse, whose first few releases veered from tape-loop folk to roots-rock to a bluesy kind of cinematic noir.

Eight albums in, Whitehorse now prove themselves masterful exponents of timeless country. *I'm Not Crying, You're Crying* is an album that follows a lineage that runs from the likes of George Jones and Melba Montgomery to Emmylou and Gram, from Johnny and June through to My Darling Clementine. Like fellow Canadian Daniel Romano, Whitehorse adopt and transmute genres in a way that feels convincing rather than contrived, as if blessed

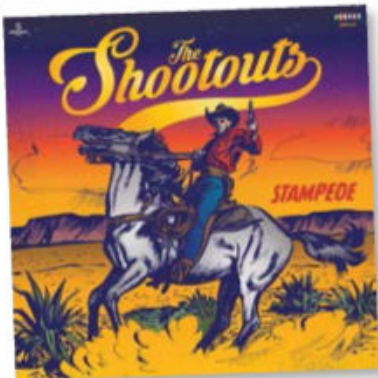
with a deeper understanding of the art of country dynamics. Harmonies are key here, their voices either blending to aching perfection on heartbreak ballads or else finding urgent motion on rockabilly-ish songs like "Manitoba Bound", which rattles along at a fair lick.

They also happen to be highly capable players, slipping readily between picked guitar, bottleneck slide and pedal steel. Above all, they're very fine singers in their own right, interchanging leads throughout. McClelland just about shades it with the wonderful "If The Loneliness Don't Kill Me" and "The Road", the latter an expansive hymn to winding curves, motel curtains and flashing neon: "*Reading signs/Chasing yellow lines/Tracing fingers over gas station maps*". And while she goes full '70s Dolly on "Bet The Farm", Doucet evokes the boozy Bakersfield country of Gram Parsons on the despairing "I Might Get Over This (But I Won't Stop Loving You)", its protagonist in the kitchen at last call, surrounded by leftovers and wine. Sometimes playful, sometimes poignant, Whitehorse may have just found their ideal territory. **ROB HUGHES**

AMERICANA ROUND-UP

OHIO quartet **The Shootouts** have roped in some choice names for third album *Stampede* SOUNDLY MUSIC, out in late February. **Ray Benson** handles production, while he and his fellow Asleep At The Wheel bandmates pop up on "One Step Forward". Other guests include **Marty Stuart**, **Buddy Miller**, **Jim Lauderdale** and The Mavericks' **Raúl Malo**.

Guitarist and lead singer **Ryan Humbert** guides the cast through a lively mix of Americana, honky-tonk and Western swing. Not to be outdone, Nashville-based singer-guitarist **Sunny War** has some seriously impressive help on her NEW WEST label debut, *Anarchist Gospel*. Overseen by Andrija Tokic, the album features **Jim James**, **Allison Russell**, **David Rawlings**, **Micah Nelson** and members of **The Raconteurs**



rock'n'roll on a self-produced set that's strengthened by the likes of **The Wood Brothers** and **Ethan Johns**, who adds strings. And Memphis alt.country troupe **Lucero** are back with *Should've Learned By Now* THIRTY TIGERS, built on pieces salvaged from previous sessions. Leader Ben Nichols explains that "the album is basically about how we know we're fuckups and I guess we're OK with that." **ROB HUGHES**

FUCKED UP

One Day MERGE

7/10

Post-hardcore band knock out latest album in a single day



As the title suggests, Fucked Up's latest album was mostly conceived in a single 24-hour period. In response to a perceived bloat in the industry – such as sprawling concept albums – they have streamlined their approach to bottle up whatever was captured on that day. Surprisingly, it's a fairly smooth and coherent affair. Opener "Found" shifts from screaming vocals, clattering drums and screeching guitars and ends up almost pop, with layered vocal harmonies stacked on top of melodic guitar lines. This marriage of guttural post-hardcore and breezy melodic rock is the overarching tone, on an album that captures an in-the-moment intensity but gives it a good polish. **DANIEL DYLAN WRAY**

NURIA GRAHAM

Cyclamen NEW DEAL/PRIMAVERA

7/10

Sensual folk-pop with a rare mix of Irish and Catalan accents



Irish-Catalan singer-songwriter Nuria Graham clothes classic folk-pop tropes in fairy-tale language, lush arrangements and wry humour on her fifth album. Her quirky mannerisms and luxuriant, sensual voice sometimes invoke Scott Walker or Kate Bush on an indie budget, notably in the swooning chamber-orchestra ballad "Oh I Bless Thee". A few tracks feel like sketchy fragments, but the best have real grandeur and ambition, especially "The Beginning Of Things", a cinematic epic of finger-picked guitar and jingle-jangle mourning. Disarmingly, Graham also makes fun of her cultural heritage, noting her struggle to "*say goodbye properly in my stupid Catalan English*" on the fragrant, whimsical "The Catalyst".

STEPH DALTON

NEAL HEPPLESTON

Plankton And The Whale Shark

HOPION

8/10

Sublime oceanic explorations from Yorkshire double bassist



The title of Neal Heppleston's 2019 debut *Folk Songs For Double Bass* accurately set out his stall, but the follow-up has something less easily categorisable in mind. Recorded with a suite of players including Jim Ghedi and Sharron Kraus, *Plankton And The Whale Shark* finds Heppleston – a bass maker by trade – leading on a richly textured suite of instrumentals inspired by the ocean, falling closer to ambient or modern classical music than anything more familiarly folk. "Siphonophore" and "In Fathoms" are gently paced, but with a powerful undertow that suggests cavernous depths. "Ghost Ship", meanwhile, ups the tempo – a driving post-rock that captures a sense of heart-in-mouth pursuit. **LOUIS PATTISON**

HOTEL LUX

Hands Across The Creek

STATE51 CONSPIRACY

7/10

Post-pub rock from London-via-Portsmouth outfit



On opener “Old Timer”, Hotel Lux frontman Lewis Duffin sings, “I don’t know how to build a wall but they reckon

I can rip off The Fall”. It’s a response to criticism aimed at the countless Fall-soundalike post-punk outfits, including Hotel Lux, in recent years, but here the band are more Ian Dury meets Art Brut. “National Team” sways rather than races, leaning heavily on a lyrical Southern drawl, with snaking guitar lines, bouncing bass and an undeniably infectious refrain. Bill Ryder-Jones’ production and piano adds a tenderness, especially to the second half of the record, on an album that feels intent on proving Hotel Lux aren’t just another post-punk throwaway.

DANIEL DYLAN WRAY

ITALIA 90

Living Human Treasure

BRACEYOURSELF

8/10

Embellished textural punk on varied debut from London band



“It’s really reactionary conservative politics to strive for constant innovation,” says Italia 90 guitarist Unusual Prices.

Instead, the band have chosen to harness a back-to-basics punk approach on their debut. While some moments feel more than familiar – the sneering delivery of “Leisure Activities” borders on John Lydon mimicry – they embellish this punk undercoat with rich textural and atmospheric explorations, as well as tracks that glide between moments of industrial, goth and new wave. They embrace frenetic intensity on “Magdalene”, but also humour and restraint on “The Mumsnet Mambo”, making it a record that celebrates dynamic eclecticism as much as it does its core punk ethos.

DANIEL DYLAN WRAY

JADU HEART

Derealised

VLF

7/10

Shape-shifting dream-rock duo deliver blissed-out beauty on third album



Feeling like a work-in-progress art project at times, Diva-Sachy Jeffrey and Alex Headford once disguised themselves

with masks and pseudonyms as they bounced from London to Bristol and back. The duo appear to have found more focus and direction on *Derealised*,



ITALIA 90

Drawing from the past, reaching for the universal

WE were keen not to be constrained by genre conventions,” say Italia 90 of their debut album *Living Human Treasure*. “We drew upon different styles, from more obvious reference points like goth rock and new wave through to classical and Latin music – to bring balance and thematic depth.”

The album, which ricochets around playfully and noisily, is intended to “create something forward-looking that draws recognisably from the past”. This ownership of pulling from influences and sources, the band feel, is a more honest way of striving for something pure. “We didn’t set out to avoid innovation,” they say, requesting to speak collectively. “But rather than

aiming to create something totally new, you’re more likely to end up making singular music if you combine your influences to create something that’s more than the sum of its parts.”

Despite this genre-hopping approach, at its core it radiates the spirit, ethos and lyrical bite of punk. “The songs are political but we’ve never wanted to place any of our music within too much of a contemporary setting. We don’t talk about current issues, and prefer to look at longer-lasting, potentially permanent structures and ideas. Hopefully that’s allowed the album to have some fairly universal themes like collectivism, individualism, anger and hope.” DANIEL DYLAN WRAY

invoking the blissed-out thunder of vintage My Bloody Valentine on the juddering “Glistener” and the molten “I Shimmer”. Elsewhere they fruitfully riff on shoegaze, dream-pop and goth tropes without slipping into mere retro pastiche, most strikingly on the joyously cascading waltz-time power ballad “Cocoon”. Even if the core Jadu Heart mission still feels a little fuzzy, their experimental detours are gaining in beauty and confidence.

STEPHEN DALTON

STEFANIE JOOSTEN

Singing To The Sky

110 INDUSTRIES

6/10

Dutch singer touched by the hand of Giorgio Moroder



Stefanie Joosten is a 34-year-old Dutch actress known primarily for her work in video games, so it is surprising, to say the

least, that her debut album has been exec-produced by 82-year-old disco titan Giorgio Moroder, his first such project since coming out of retirement. Not only that, he’s co-written five songs

for it, three with old foil Pete “I Feel Love” Bellotte and two with Tom “Take My Breath Away” Whitlock, each redolent – particularly the strutting “Knock Me On My Feet” – of their peak-’80s moments for *Flashdance* and *Top Gun*. Tellingly, the rest of the material is more generic, lacking Giorgio’s stardust.

PIERS MARTIN

JERRY JOSEPH & THE STIFF BOYS

TICK DIAL BACK SOUND

8/10

Odds and ends from Joseph’s sessions with the Drive-By Truckers



Jerry Joseph’s new collection is like a tick on the bloodhound of his frenzied, deeply worried 2020 album *Beautiful Madness*, which he recorded with the Drive-By Truckers as his backing band and with Patterson Hood producing. The first half is comprised of demos and non-album cuts, full of rough and weary wisdom. The second half collects songs from Joseph’s live set opening for the Truckers at the legendary 40 Watt

in Athens. In the studio and on stage, the band are nimble enough to animate these songs without distracting from his vocals, and Joseph emerges as a charismatic artist still reeling from the madness all around him.

STEPHEN DEUSNER

KING TUFF

Smalltown Stardust

SUBPOP

7/10

Former Witch frontman in pastoral-pop mood



Over five solo albums, Kyle Thomas has cultivated a (mostly) party-primed style of ’60s garage rock shot through with glam

and sleaze rock. On his last record, *The Other*, the LA resident edged into something more personal, detailed and wistful, and it’s those elements that bloom fully here. Co-written and co-produced by Sasami, it’s partly a homage to his small hometown in Vermont and as such leans into dreamy, folk-ish rock and pastoral psychedelia (Bolan, Barrett, Elliott Smith), without abandoning his groovy playfulness. It’s an effortless charmer, in fact, whether revisiting glam-pop for “Portrait Of God” or coming on like a modest, countrified Fleetwood Mac with “Rock River”.

SHARON O’CONNELL

LADYTRON

Time’s Arrow

COOKING VINYL

8/10

Stylish return from global electro-classicists



From their late-’90s beginnings, Ladytron’s industrial light and magic was so richly conceived that they might have

escaped from a Peter Strickland film, all sinister eroticism and immaculate surfaces. So it’s no surprise that their 2019 return from hiatus was so assured, subtly but stylishly updating their signature soundworld for a new decade in the light of bands they’ve influenced like Chvrches. *Time’s Arrow* does venture a little outside their comfort zone – the lush “California” is a Cocteau Twins fever dream – but they’re at their best closer to home on the career high of “Misery Remember Me”, a glittering palace of gothic Italo disco.

STEPHEN TROUSSÉ



Ladytron: all that glitters



Threeform:
(l-r) Malone,
Railton and
O'Malley

KALI MALONE FEATURING LUCY RAILTON AND STEPHEN O'MALLEY

Does Spring Hide Its Joy
IDEOLOGIC ORGAN

8/10

Released from quarantine,
two years on. Epic drone
experiment from US composer.
By John Robinson



KALI MALONE isn't an artist afraid of the monumental. An experimental musician whose work has for several years explored the relationship between sound and its environment, she has composed for choirs, gongs and a massive lute called a theorbo; worked on epic installations, and in colleges, churches and a Swedish nuclear reactor.

On record, her ambitions haven't been small either. Her first major work, *Sacrificial Code* (2019) was a double album which explored the shared territory between longform organ drones and what felt like a post-rave ambience. It was music with opportunities for both long contemplation and emotional release, which you could imagine accommodating a solemn choir or a hard-charging remix.

Sacrificial Code didn't only offer immersive music, it also took it out into the world. The song "Sacrificial Code" itself appeared twice, once performed live in the Haga Kyrka, Gothenburg, played by Malone and fellow organ/drone traveller Ellen Arkbro. It expanded to fill the room; and introduced some of the features which have come to comprise her work since. Namely, powerful music conducted in spectacular, Instagram-worthy surroundings, and revisiting material to see what else it might yield.

Does Spring Hide Its Joy follows Malone's more modestly scaled *Living Torch* album of 2022, and continues to investigate these ideas. Recorded in large part at the Funkhaus in Berlin – a former radio station that's a masterpiece of both sound and interior design – the album comprises three one-hour tilts

at a drone composition. Rather than the organ, this time it's played by a small ensemble comprising Malone on electronics, the British cellist Lucy Railton and, on guitar, Stephen O'Malley from Sunn O))), founder of the Ideologic Organ label.

If Malone's work has previously involved itself with an environment, this is an album more about the "when" than the where. Recorded during the quarantine of spring 2020, during a time of enforced self-reflection for the world, the music here – a contemplative, uncertain space with dark edges and occasional spikes – can't help but have resonance with moods of that time, in which avant-garde concepts like duration and intensity became part of our everyday lives.

There were clues to how this might sound when Kali Malone supported O'Malley's Sunn O))) in London this summer. In this vaguely theatrical space – at such a show the dry ice is thick, the volume unimaginable and the headliners wearing cowls – Malone performed an electronic set walking a line between troubling ambience and power electronics. No stranger to the misty and disputed territory between ambient/noise/metal – her Sorrowing Christ project with Aaron

Miller-Rehm is considered able to hold its own in sludge/doom circles – Malone wielded a kind of deterrent power, showing what she could have unleashed, but didn't.

Over the three compositions here, the group play with some of those dynamic ideas. Railton's cello provides a constant service, the physical mechanics of her playing setting the measure of passing time, into which the other players can offer colour and contrast. Malone's sine-wave oscillators often provide a glassy ambience like Tibetan prayer bowls.

SLEEVE NOTES

Disc 1 – Does
Spring Hide Its
Joy vi

Disc 2 – Does
Spring Hide Its
Joy vii

Disc 3 – Does
Spring Hide Its
Joy viii

Produced by:
Kali Malone
Recorded
at: MONOM,
Funkhaus, Berlin
Personnel:
Kali Malone
(electronics),
Stephen O'Malley
(guitar), Lucy
Railton (cello)

There is a changing and organic shape to the three versions of the piece here, which expands and contracts, the trio hovering around one note and its harmonics. As the playing converges, there's often an uncertainty about precisely what or who we're listening to. Rather than a late-'50s jazz kind of situation, where musicians might drop out to showcase a spot from another player, here the group merge into a considerate ebbing unit, a storm glowering overhead which never fully bursts. The musicians occasionally nudge at the limits of the music's throbbing hum, while never pulling it apart.

Key to all this is O'Malley's fruity feedback guitar, which growls menacingly ("viii"), bays for release ("vi"), and sometimes escapes altogether (as in "vii", which might be the most enjoyably dynamic of the takes). If *Sacrificial Code* could

sometimes feel as if it was dance music without the repetition, here the music feels like a version of psychedelic rock: breaking on through to the other side, just without a conventional song.

As occasional clanks and thuds remind us, this is longform music made in real time, rather than an infinite Eno-esque algorithm. All round it's more involving and physical than ambience: with its imperfections and peril, it's the product of a group working together, which feels instructive to the wider context. As the music spreads, and the sound engrosses and uplifts you, the tacit message feels humble and lightly worn: one of consideration, empathy and collective strength.

Q&A

**Kali Malone &
Stephen O'Malley:**
"Feels like home"

**What's the relationship of
this work to *The Sacrificial
Code* and *Living Torch*?**

Kali Malone: It's a long-duration ensemble piece I have always wanted to make. It is the natural continuation of my fascination for tuning and the perceptual transformation of time – both of which themes are prominent in *The Sacrificial Code* and *Living Torch*. The instrumentation and structure are different than those records, but the music's spirit, sonic palette and effect all resonate in a place that feels like home to me.

**How did things evolve
working with Lucy and
Stephen?**

Kali Malone: Working with Lucy and Stephen is a precious gift of collaboration and friendship. While we all come from different musical backgrounds, we also share a significant amount of references and vocabulary. The piece has taught us how to play it, how to listen, and how to pay attention and react to each other. I just generated the structure, but now the structure is constantly teaching us.

**How do you feel about the
work post-pandemic?**

Stephen O'Malley: It's unbearable in a way, the gift of space and temporality we had then... Not

to wax nostalgic about it, but I don't know if the world could fully appreciate it. Especially in retrospect from this moment, the urgency and demand of productivity and task-driven life has risen to new heights.

Kali Malone: For me, this piece keeps on giving and expanding. It's a collective musical practice that we began together during the pandemic, and now it's become a consistent aspect of our musical lives that gets better and deeper every time we play and reflect on the music. **INTERVIEW:** JOHN ROBINSON



Kali
Malone

THE WAR ON DRUGS

| | | |
|-------|----------|------------------|
| 17/06 | BRIGHTON | BRIGHTON CENTRE |
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| 20/06 | GLASGOW | OVO HYDRO |
| 21/06 | HALIFAX | THE PIECE HALL |



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BEN LAMAR GAY

Certain Reveries INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM
7/10*Open improv by livewire cornettist*

Ben LaMar Gay's 2021 album *Open Arms To Open Us* marked him out as one of the more idiosyncratic voices from Chicago's resurgent jazz scene, drawing on influences from Tropicália to boom-bap rap. *Certain Reveries* is similarly expansive, but a sight rawer. Recorded with percussionist Tommaso Moretti at London Jazz Fest, "You Ain't Never Lied" and "Parade Debris" unfold in a clamour of squalling horns, chants and hollers and electronic manipulations. It's far from a smooth listen – LaMar Gay's cornet is a bright and unruly thing – but there's a lively chemistry and ambitious methodology that keeps things gripping. **LOUIS PATTISON**

SG LEWIS

Audiolust & Higherlove PMR/EMI
6/10*Euphoric second from disco futurist*

At 28, Lewis seems to be on his way to becoming the new Mark Ronson, in demand to produce and remix everyone from Dua Lipa to Jessie Ware while forging his own career as a purveyor of dancefloor bangers and soaring, blissed-out pop ecstasy. His 2021 solo debut *Times* topped the UK dance chart and, the follow-up offers more of the same adrenaline rush, from the contagious "Vibe Like This" with guest vocals by Ty Dolla \$ign and Lucky Daye to the surging disco-futurism of "Infatuation" via the hypnotic electro-grooves of "Fever Dreamer" and the hook-laden, sunshine rapture of "Something About Your Love". **NIGEL WILLIAMSON**

ROY MONTGOMERY

Camera Melancholia GRAPEFRUIT
9/10*Compassionate, moving songs of loss and humanity*

New Zealand's Roy Montgomery has long used simple means to express and explore complex emotions. For the best part of several

decades, his music has been grounded in multi-tracked, droning guitar, organ and voice; before, in bands like The Pin Group and Dadamah, his songs were potent in their directness. *Camera Melancholia* is a dense, emotionally exhausting work of mourning, for Montgomery's late partner Kerry McCarthy; it pays profound tribute by not shying away from the complexity of its emotions, capturing snapshots of a loved one's presence and absence, devotionally, with great humility and care. A compassionate music. **JONDALE**

LIELA MOSS

Internal Working Model

BELLA UNION

7/10

Intense third solo outing from Duke Spirit singer

You can hear Moss's frustration at our dystopian times, from the moody trip-hop of opener "Empathy Files" on which she sings of a society that has "data for miles on you" to the cathartic urgency of her plea for us to "Love As Hard As You Can" on the closer, featuring Dhani Harrison. In between she rages at the world's iniquities over tense, retro-synth grooves on "Vanishing Shadows", with Gary Numan on guest vocals, and sketches an empathetic prescription for our ills on the hauntingly tender "New Day". She's angry, but she's trying to offer some answers too: more power to her for such positivity. **NIGEL WILLIAMSON**

MOZART ESTATE

Pop-Up! Ker-Ching! And The Possibilities Of Modern Shopping CHERRY RED

8/10

Lawrence redoubles on his '70s pop love to a nation's relief

What with the cascading political calamities and the cost of living crisis, Britain may have gone sufficiently bonkers for Lawrence to seem like the last sane man. Indeed, the timing couldn't be better for a fresh batch of his crafty simulations of shiny pop chintz from an earlier era of lowered expectations. He sets the tone for this revamped iteration of Go-Kart Mozart with "I'm Gonna Wiggle",

which could be a Wombles singalong if not for the reference to drug mules. On the similarly chirpy likes of "Relative Poverty" and "Doin' The Brick Wall Crawl", Lawrence repurposes his most beloved pop-cultural detritus of yesteryear to skewer the inanities of the present. Even at his most deadpan, the man can't disguise his glee.

JASON ANDERSONTHE MURDER CAPITAL
Gigi's Recovery

HUMAN SEASON

8/10

Twists rather than transformation on post-punks' second

Few bands herald their second album as the start of a new chapter, as TMC's James McGovern has done. While this

Dublin quintet's latest stops short of total reinvention, the changes are marked – John Congleton brings the darkly spangled, alt.rock power, and textured synths do a lot of melodic lifting. Rather than Joy Division, as with their debut, it seems Interpol's *Antics* and Those Bastard Souls may have been touchstones, while the spirit of MBV lurks beneath "Ethel", an urgent and commanding standout. Very different are the ominous, industrial-rock mien of "The Stars Will Leave Their Stage" and "Only Good Things", its buoyant, loose-swinging antidote. **SHARON O'CONNELL**

NATIVE HARROW
Old Kind Of Magic

LOOSE MUSIC

7/10

Fifth album by American ex-pats in England casts a spell

Following the release of their fourth album, 2020's *Closeness*, the duo known as Native Harrow moved across the Atlantic

and settled down in rural Sussex. The change of scenery defines their follow-up, which adds some UK folk flair to their US rock and soul, from the birdsong on opener "Song For Joan" to the trippy Mellotron on "Magic Eye". They might sound like tourists if vocalist Devin Tuel didn't channel Sandy Denny as well as Judy Collins, nimbly navigating the bluesy drama of "Used To Be Free" as well as the Dusty pop grandeur of "As It Goes". **STEPHEN DEUSNER**

BILLY NOMATES

Cacti INVADA

9/10

Stunning second from Melton Mowbray's finest one-woman band

Billy Nomates' (aka Tor Maries) 2020 debut was a DIY miracle – the spirit of "Piss Factory" Patti Smith manifesting in

the poundshop dolescape of Sleaford Mods – but its success was scuppered by lockdown. *Cacti* is the sound of a young woman seizing her opportunity with both hands, narrowing her focus from social decay to romantic self-sabotage but expanding her soundworld from GarageBand beats to urgent, widescreen '80s pop. From the opening "The Balance Has Gone", *Cacti* is relentless, laser-focused and irresistible.

"I never had vertigo in my whole life", she sings at one point, sounding uncannily like a post-punk Kim Carnes – but on this basis, she's only heading higher, shaping up to be the most exciting British solo artist since PJ Harvey. **STEPHEN TROUSSÉ**

OOZING WOUND
We Cater To Cowards

THRILL JOCKEY

7/10

Chicago underground veterans' fifth: if it ain't broke...

Across four LPs, this trio have made clear their view on the sanctity of "true metal" by fusing thrash

with sludge rock and monolithic grunge, leaning on (usually) just one brutally eviscerating riff within often complex arrangements. The whole world's in crisis and Oozing Wound see no reason to ease off their righteous assault now, though their fifth flashes dark humour in titles like "The Good Times (I Don't Miss 'Em)", where Zack Weil's larynx-shredding yowl suggests Cobain to the power of 200, and "Midlife Crisis Actor", which links to fellow noiseniks The Jesus Lizard and Lightning Bolt. More surprisingly, horns feature, briefly bringing some skronk to "Old Sludge". **SHARON O'CONNELL**

COURTNEY PINE
Spirituality

PROPER

7/10

Elegant clarinet/piano duets from British jazz's éminence grise...

On this sequel to 2015's acclaimed *Song (The Ballad Book)*, Pine teams up again with Zoe Rahman for a set

of bass clarinet and piano duets. Mixing originals and standards, the mood is elegiac yet earthily so as the duo improvise inventively on tunes such as "Windmills Of My Mind", "Blue Moon" and "Motherless Child". A string quartet augment them on a handful of tracks, including "Your Majesty". Apparently when Pine received his MBE in 2000, the Queen cheekily asked if he had composed anything in her honour. The answer was no, but now she's no longer around to hear it he's finally obliged – and rather gloriously so. **NIGEL WILLIAMSON**



The Brother Moves On: passionate songs that push beyond jazz

THE BROTHER MOVES ON

\$/he Who Feeds You... Owns You NATIVEREBEL

8/10

Fiery, pulsating, spiritual music from South Africa. By John Lewis



WHAT does protest music sound like in contemporary South Africa?

Under apartheid it seemed a relatively straightforward

affair: a call for the dismantling of an avowedly racist system. Even playing jazz – a music that implicitly challenged the strictures of racial segregation – became a subversive political act. It made South Africa the crucible for some of the most fiery and passionate jazz to emerge in the second half of the 20th century. Now a generation of musicians and writers are addressing the messy issues that face the Rainbow Nation 30 years after the end of apartheid: the corruption of Jacob Zuma and other ANC leaders; the country's rampant homophobia; the failure to address the AIDS epidemic; the stubborn continuation of institutionalised racial segregation.

South African music might have dropped off the international radar since the end of apartheid, but its jazz scene has continued to thrive. The Brother Moves On – named after a mishearing of the character Brother Mouzone, from *The Wire* – are leading lights in a generation of South Africans making music that is both spiritual and militant. When they emerged, just over a decade ago, they were a loose art and storytelling collective, as likely to appear

in a church or museum as a gig venue. On paper they look like an orthodox jazz band – there is a core drums/bass/guitar rhythm section along with tenor sax, alto sax and trombone and an occasional pianist – but this Johannesburg-based outfit drift beyond the ambit of jazz: into rock, into funk, into gospel, into prayer.

Their first album for the new label launched by London-based saxophonist Shabaka Hutchings features passionate songs that defy categorisation. “Sphila” is a fast, urgent, punky waltz with martial drumming and a spidery, post-punk guitar line that recalls Keith Levene, based around a one-chord chant. “Mazel”, based around a three-note guitar arpeggio, recalls New Order’s “Elegia”, but laced with sighing horns and the mournful, wordless howls of Siyabonga Mthembu. “Itumeleng Revisited” is a cover of a 1977 standard by the Soweto Afro-jazz outfit Batsumi, where Shabaka Hutchings’ flute, Bokani Dyer’s Fender Rhodes and Muhammad Dawjee’s tenor sax knit together to create a vibe similar to that found on *Astral Weeks* – but instead

of Van, we have Siyabonga Mthembu offering wordless prayer and making birdsong noises. “Bayakhal” is a pulsating piece of Mbaqanga-style township jive, based around Zelizwe Mthembu’s spangly guitar, but reset with a fast 6/8 rhythm and a dramatic horn arrangement so that it ends up sounding more like a piece of Nigerian afrobeat than anything from South Africa.

Siyabonga sings in a variety of languages – isiZulu, Xhosa and Sesetho as well as English – but no translation is needed with the gorgeous, spine-tingling “Hamba The Reprise”, where the band lead an a cappella version of a funeral hymn made famous by Ladysmith Black Mambazo. It segues into a pulsating eulogy, sweetened by Hutchings’ clarinet obbligatos, ending with the chant “*Lapa emhlabeni*” (‘because there is no rest’). And, even if you don’t follow the lyrics, you can guess that there’s some political fury behind the thumpy, punky “Sphila”, a protest song about land rights in a country where the white minority still owns most of the nation’s land.

“Puleng”, which starts with an intro in praise of the great South African bassist Herbie Tsoaeli, is a jagged waltz, featuring Mthunzi Mvubu’s alto sax and Zelizwe Mthembu’s guitar, which follows a young child calling out to his father, a migrant worker, as he crosses the border to work in a rainy field. But there is also room for joy, and simple love songs. “Sweetie Love Oh” is a piece of lopsided funk where the narrator pleads to meet his lover at a taxi rank, offering his “*love that will fill a bath*”.

What unites these very different songs is a distinctive pulse: nearly all are in a 6/8 rhythm, and each pulsates like a heartbeat, waltzes like Gregory Maqoma or gallops like a leopard. “The 6/8 rhythm is a South African language, a tradition that taps into the spiritual,” says Siyabonga. “It’s how our land speaks and vibrates. It’s why some of these songs have changed over the years – it took us a while to understand that 6/8 is our traditional signature.”

SLEEVE NOTES

- 1 Puleng (Intro)
- 2 Bayakhala
- 3 Sphila
- 4 Puleng (Extended)
- 5 Itumeleng Revisited
- 6 Sweetie Love Oh
- 7 Hamba The Reprise
- 8 Mazel
- 9 Ta Tom

Produced by: Shabaka Hutchings
Recorded at: Asylum Studios, Pretoria; live in front of an audience at Dyertribe Studios, Centurion, Gauteng, SA

Personnel includes: Siyabonga Mthembu (vocals), Zelizwe Mthembu (guitar, vocals), Ayanda Zalekile (bass, vocals), Simphiwe Tshabalala (drums, vocals), Mthunzi Mvubua (alto sax), Shabaka Hutchings (flute, clarinet)

Siyabonga Mthembu: “Protest music is still protest music”

What is “protest music” in contemporary South Africa? In isiZulu, “Sphila” is about South Africa’s central political and spiritual issue, which is the ownership of land. Our 13 per cent minority white population owns close to 87 per cent of our land. And the majority’s push for land is not a purely capitalist one but spiritual, in that our cosmology is a circular one which requires us to bury our elders close to us. How do we do so while still being constricted to the same

concentration camps known as townships? So protest music is still protest music as the conditions have not changed, with few being given a seat at the table. Economic apartheid is rife.

What is the band’s writing process? Once you bring a song to the circle it is no longer yours. We tend to destroy and recreate it in the band’s tradition. The more we perform it, the more we allow it to speak before we record.

What languages do you sing in on this album? We sing in Zulu, Xhosa, English and Sesetho. Multilingualism

is vitality in South Africa, it shows that you understand that being South African is not a homogeneous experience.

How important is Shabaka Hutchings to the band? Shabaka is a brother, a member in many ways of this collective. Our first engagement with the Total Refreshment Centre family in East London, thus the London underground was, through Shabaka, inviting us to open for The Comet Is Coming. From this we had Yussef Kamaal open for us at the Bussey Building next, so we were always amongst kings. **JOHN LEWIS**



HC McEntire: big-hearted meditations from the wilds

HC McENTIRE

Every Acre

MERGE

8/10

North Carolina singer-songwriter digs deep into the dirt for her third album.
By Stephen Deusner



"SHADOWS", a standout on HC McEntire's new album, ends with a muted chorus of frogs and crickets and other Carolina wildlife.

It's a stark yet vivid cacophony of natural sounds, which the singer-songwriter recorded near her former home in North Carolina. It arrives like quiet punctuation at the end of that gently despairing song, the "amen" after a prayer – yet you'd swear you could hear those noises throughout *Every Acre*, perhaps even on every album she's ever made. In her solo career and stretching back even to her work with the bands Bellafe and the great Mount Moriah, McEntire has always found inspiration in the Tarheel countryside and in its long musical history: she has turned the state's forests and hollers and rivers and snakes and deer into songs that pay no attention to the boundary fences between gospel and country and folk and psychedelic rock.

Eclectic and immersive and unabashedly beautiful, *Every Acre* is the culmination of McEntire's long collaboration with North Carolina. Every one of these songs includes a line like "cattails catching all the

copperheads" or "yield is rich with yellow pine" and "steady picking out bobcat skulls". She's in love with these sights, but she also loves the way those words sound, the way "vidalias" falls off a Southern tongue: vih-day-lee-uhs, that last syllable a long and molasses-slow breath. Listening to this album, you get the sense that these songs are specific not just to the Tarheel State, but to those acres on the Eno River, just a few miles from Durham but a world away from any city, where she lived for a decade before relocating last year.

Even as she's tethered to the terrain around her home, McEntire branches out musically on *Every Acre*. When Mount Moriah disbanded and she went solo with 2018's *Lionheart*, her music was rooted in a muddy strain of country and folk, with clear inspiration from acts like Indigo Girls and Lucinda Williams as well as Dolly Parton and Tammy Wynette. On that album and especially on songs like "Baby's Got The Blues" and "Red Silo", the music allowed her to evoke her upbringing in the western end of the state, revelling in the details of an outdoor childhood. Her 2019 cover of Led Zeppelin's "Houses Of The Holy" signalled a shift toward psychedelic rock on 2020's *Eno Axis*. (In

SLEEVE NOTES

- 1 New View
- 2 Shadows (feat. SG Goodman)
- 3 Turpentine (feat. Amy Ray)
- 4 Dovetail
- 5 Rows Of Clover
- 6 Big Love
- 7 Soft Crook
- 8 Wild For The King
- 9 Gospel Of A Certain Kind

Produced by: HC McEntire, Missy Thangs, Luke Norton
Recorded at: Betty's, Chapel Hill, NC; Legitimate Business, Greensboro, NC
Personnel includes: HC McEntire (vocals, guitar, field recordings), Luke Norton (guitar, piano, Wurlitzer, pump organ), Casey Toll (bass), Daniel Faust (drums, percussion), Missy Thangs (keyboards, synthesiser), Amy Ray (backing vocals), SG Goodman (backing vocals)

a wink, though, she recited the lyrics to "Stand By Your Man" during the outro on that cover, as though such disparate songs emanated from the same human urge.)

Every Acre picks up that psych-rock thread, as McEntire gives her band a little more freedom to cut loose. Bassist Casey Toll and drummer Daniel Faust have been playing with her for years, yet they sound more inventive here, rooting "Rows Of Clover" and "Soft Crook" in intricate Crazy Horse rhythms. She and guitarist/co-producer Luke Norton make space for rumbling guitar licks and even a lengthy solo at the end of "Turpentine" (which features backing vocals from Indigo Girl Amy Ray). The droning sitar on "Big Love" evokes a bucolic trippiness, as does the forest ambience that undergirds closer "Gospel Of A Certain Kind": more wind and rain and another chorus of frogs. At times *Every Acre* sounds like Pink Floyd if they'd started out in rural Appalachia rather than the UFO Club.

"Dovetail" is a straightforward hymn, complete with churchly piano and a melody that owes as much to 19th-century poet and composer Fanny J Crosby as to North Carolina old-time icon Alice Gerrard. The lyrics conjure a parade of different women and their shared yet often unspoken desires: churchgoing wives who "eat only after they pray" and others, more reckless, who "chase their whiskey with wine". Toward each and every one of them McEntire displays a landslide of compassion, partly because she sees a little of herself in their cautions and traumas and wants. Every one of these songs is a big-hearted meditation on love and sex and faith and especially healing, as though what roots us to our own lands is loss and grief and recovery.

With its steady gallop and funereal piano, "Rows Of Clover" could be McEntire's dreamy reimagining of Zeppelin's "No Quarter", but it reveals a grieving, sobbing heart, as she buries a "steadfast hound" in the yard: "It ain't the easy kind of healing", she declares, "when you're down on your knees, clawing at the garden". There's a similar tragedy, a similar grave, on every acre, and while healing is never easy, it's the hardship that makes everything so much sweeter.

Q&A

HC McEntire: "Every Acre, in many ways, is a long goodbye"

Why does that particular phrase "every acre" stand out as an album title?

My relationship to the natural world has long felt like a spiritual mentorship. The album title came from a buried lyric in "Turpentine". I found the simplicity of those two small words so powerful and relevant in summing up this collection of songs – from my personal experience, while also offering enough space for outside interpretation.

How did North Carolina inspire these songs?

After almost a decade of living along the Eno River on the same property, I recently had to relocate. My experience in spiritually navigating my final year there inspired an enthusiastic deep dive into the subject of land ownership. *Every Acre*, in many ways, is a long goodbye. I extensively researched ancestral land in the Eno community, scoured county archives for land tract maps and Revolutionary War-era deeds. I needed to peel back the layers and last names to find the hard truths.

It seems there's a slightly more psych-rock aspect to this album.

I wouldn't say that we had any genre-specific or stylistic intentions for this album, other than a strong commitment to being vulnerable, honest and present. There were subjects I explored narratively with great passion and perhaps that subconsciously inspired us to respond with particular intensities at times. To me, personally, it felt more like a devotion to transparency.
INTERVIEW: STEPHEN DEUSNER

IGGY POP

Every Loser

ATLANTIC

7/10

A raft of special guests play second fiddle to Iggy's subterranean vocals



Iggy's latest was made with members of Guns N' Roses, the Chili Peppers, Jane's Addiction plus the late Taylor Hawkins,

who provide a professionally truculent background to tracks like the loose and slinky "All The Way Down" or the terrific "Modern Day Rip Off", a self-deprecating Stooges pastiche. But Iggy's voice is the star, surely never deeper than on weary acoustic ballad "Morning Show", and he highlights that on a couple of spoken-word numbers. On "Neo Punk" he affects an almost convincing cockney accent, while power-pop/post-punk hybrid "Comments" shows he can still turn that growl into a purr. **PETER WATTS**

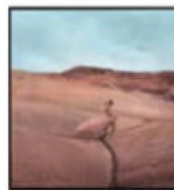
MARGO PRICE

Strays

LOMA VISTA

8/10

Nashville-based outlier brings swagger and depth to audacious fourth studio LP



On *Strays*, Price teams with co-producer Jonathan Wilson, whose evocative soundscapes recall his inspired

collaboration with Angel Olsen on *Big Time*. Mike Campbell's crushing riffs on "Light Me Up" signal Price's stylistic debt to Tom Petty, a connection reinforced by the *Damn The Torpedoes*-style organ churn that powers surging opener "Been To The Mountain" and the defiant anthem "Change Of Heart". On "Radio", a chugging synth and big-throated harmonies from Sharon Van Etten bring a delectable contrast to the song's inherent rootsiness, while Lucius intensify the Harrisonian big ballad "Anytime You Call". With this devastatingly personal song cycle, Price completes her transformation from retro-country preservationist to anything-goes auteur. **BUD SCOPPA**

PHIL RANELIN & WENDELL HARRISON

Phil Ranelin & Wendell Harrison: JID016

JAZZ IS DEAD

8/10

Fresh vibes from the Tribe: jazz veterans back in the studio



Adrian Younge and Ali Shaheed Muhammad's Jazz Is Dead imprint has been doing valuable work these last

couple of years, tempting the elder statesmen of the genre into their Los Angeles studio to engage in new work. Ranelin, a trombonist, and Harrison,

a saxophonist, were the driving force behind Tribe Records, a Detroit imprint bridging the gap between post-Coltrane free jazz and soul and funk. The mood is live and upfront, and "Running With The Tribe" and "Black Census" indicate the pair's fire is undimmed, both stepping up to layer rich, soulful leads over simmering keys, wah-wah guitar and a restless backbeat. **LOUIS PATTISON**

GEMMA RAY

Gemma Ray & The Death Bell Gang

BRONZERAT

8/10

Berlin-based torch singer sets the template alight



"No Happy Shit" read a sign on Gemma Ray's wall while collaborating with veteran German producer

Ralph Goldkind, whose scrambled treatments of recorded snippets she shared with him form the basis of her ninth album. The menacing "No Love" and chilling "Procession" suggest she's achieved that goal, as do "I Am Not Who I Am"'s dark, disorientating groove, the swirling "All These Things" and the doom-laden "Blowing Up Rocks". But the mesmerising "Howling" lets the light in and "Come Oblivion" exploits her familiar talent for harmonies, while crepuscular instrumental "Tempelhof Desert Inn" restores the twangs which normally accompany her. **WYNDHAM WALLACE**

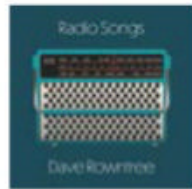
DAVE ROWNTREE

Radio Songs

COOKING VINYL

8/10

Strong solo debut by Blur drummer



The pantheon of great – even halfway decent – solo albums by drummers is sparsely populated. Nevertheless,

Dave Rowntree must be welcomed ungrudgingly into it. *Radio Songs*, his first solo outing, is underpinned by the idea of recreating childhood twirlings of the AM dial in search of signals from bigger cities, other planets. Its melancholy electronica is not, however, unapproachable. The likes of "Downtown" and "1000 Miles" are modest yet sumptuous ballads which suggest something of a lo-fi Blue Nile, while "London Bridge", from the title downwards, is basically a Blur song, to which he is surely entitled. **ANDREW MUELLER**



Gemma Ray: darkness visible

REVELATIONS



DAVE ROWNTREE

"I did want to surprise people"

It must be close to a record for the longest gap between debut album with a group and debut album as a solo artist – fully 31 years between Blur's opening shot, *Leisure*, and Dave Rowntree's first solo effort, the new *Radio Songs*.

"I've always written songs," says Rowntree. "But it was the confidence I found in the success of my film-scoring career, coupled with the space that Covid lockdowns made in my life, that made it happen. Now I've done it, I'm wondering why I waited quite so long."

So will listeners. *Radio Songs* defies a rich lexicon of jokes about the solo works of drummers: it's a collection suffused with glorious downbeat melodies, and

congruent lyrical wistfulness. "It's autobiographical," Rowntree confirms. "It's a solo album after all, so that's what people will expect."

People might also expect it to sound like the band of which Rowntree was a quarter – a concern which Rowntree found a way not to overthink. "Blur has its own sound because of the input of the four members," he says, "and it's impossible to replicate that. But I did want to surprise people with the record, and it's surprisingly difficult to figure out what that means in musical terms. I ended up deciding that people would expect me to make some kind of drum album, and as I don't have a drumkit in the studio, it was actually pretty easy to avoid that." **ANDREW MUELLER**

LUCAS SANTANA

O Paraíso

NOFORMAT

9/10

Multilingual, retro-futurist Brazilian Tropicália



This Bahia-born, restlessly cosmopolitan singer-songwriter is an expert in updating the legacy of bossa

nova for the 21st century. Here he sings hymns to the environment in Portuguese, French and heavily accented English, his gloriously doleful voice sometimes put through a vocoder and accompanied by bossa-tinged acoustic guitars, Brazilian hand percussion, soft horns and the occasional synth. The title track taps into Os Mutantes-style psychedelic Tropicália and "What's Life" sounds like a Brazilian Kraftwerk, but the highlights might be two covers: an aqueous take on Jorge Ben's "Errare Humanum Est" and gorgeous bossa nova version of McCartney's "The Fool On The Hill". **JOHN LEWIS**

SAULT

11

FOREVERLIVING ORIGINALS

9/10

Mysterious London R&B collective, literally giving it away



In November 2022, producer Inflo gave away five – FIVE! – excellent and very different albums online, a total of 56 tracks. *AIIR* is a lavish orchestral suite; the Funkadelic-ish *Today & Tomorrow* puts funky heavy metal riffs against a children's choir; *Untitled (God)* features 21 deeply spiritual songs in a range of genres; while *Earth* continues the gospel vibe, adding some heavy Brazilian and West African beats. But *11* is, marginally, the pick of the bunch, a mix of 11 pop miniatures, including the psychedelic Afro-pop of "Together", the Brit-soul of "Higher", the dreamy, quiet-storm R&B of "Fight For Love", the slow-burning funk of "In The Air" and the funk-meets-ragga of "Glory". Every track is a banger. **JOHN LEWIS**



Slug: playing a shameless game

SIMON SCOTT

Long Drove ROOM40

8/10

Slowdive drummer's immersive Fenland diary



Simon Scott is an accomplished sound recordist and experimental composer whose work explores the relationship between music and nature, often located in marshland near his Norfolk home. Scott's 11th solo album, *Long Drove*, is his latest site-specific survey of the Fens following *Below Sea Level* (2012) and *Floodlines* (2016), not that you'd necessarily realise this from the gorgeous decaying drift of "The Black Fens" and "Whittlesea Mere". Later, amid drizzle, wind and birdsong, Scott plays old metal posts with soft mallets to create muffled melodies for the "Holme Fence Post" trilogy, while "The Whistling Wires" synthesises natural aeolian frequencies. **PIERS MARTIN**

SLUG

Thy Socialite!

DAYLIGHT SAVING

7/10

Field Music's label debuts with band-mate's jittery, glammed-up third



Ian Black jokingly calls this a "self-character assassination album", modelled on the fan-cleaving likes of *Berlin* and *Death Of A Ladies Man*. Its pleasures are embodied by opener "Insults Sweet Like Treacle", a pocket glam symphony erupting into Sparks harmonies and prog odysseys, offering askew ideas with a swaggering flourish. "Depends On What You Think Is Nice" is a warm soft-rock ballad, while "Silly Little Things That You Did" lauds absurd human flaws, belying Black's auto-hit-job with barbed empathy. Clipped post-punk rhythms à la Field Music sometimes straitjacket the giddily shameless glam-rockisms and promiscuously plundered pop. **NICK HASTED**

SUSS

SUSS NORTHERNSPY

8/10

Fourth album commemorates co-founder's 2021 passing



Ambient country pioneers SUSS's latest – a compilation of four EPs, the last unreleased – documents their difficult decision to continue as a trio of Pat Irwin, Bob Holmes and Jonathan Gregg, with nine later tracks lacking their late colleague Gary Leib's synthesisers. That the first's called "Winter Is Hard" betrays its sparser landscapes, and "North Wind" is inevitably similarly eerie, if still as warm-hearted as earlier quartet tracks like the shimmering "Kingsman" and – of course – "Heat Haze". "Ranger"'s Ebow and acoustic guitars, meanwhile, ensure additional poignancy isn't traded for desolate beauty, while "That Good Night" could be Eno's *Apollo* crash-landed in America's Sonoran Desert. **WYNDHAM WALLACE**

SWEET BABOO

The Wreckage AMAZING TAPES

8/10

Kitchen sink curios from a genuine Welsh one-off



Having lent his idiosyncratic talents to Gruff Rhys and Cate Le Bon in recent times, Sweet Baboo (aka North Wales maverick Stephen Black) returns with his first album of alluring pop whimsy in five years. "Hopeless" has the air of Edwyn Collins dabbling in yacht rock, the delicate piano ballad "Take A Left Out Of The Door" is a wry pen portrait of his seaside hometown of Penarth, and the bouncy riff and xylophone interjections of "Good Luck" celebrate a love affair taped together with compromise. Elsewhere, Black sings of wayward pets and the struggle of keeping plants alive with sly humour but the conviction of a sombre-faced balladeer. **TERRY STAUNTON**

THE TUBS

Dead Meat

TROUBLE IN MIND

8/10

Infectious jangle-pop from latest Joanna Gruesome spin-off



Despite calling it a day in 2017, Welsh gutter punks Joanna Gruesome have continued in each other's musical orbits. The Tubs reunites primary songwriters Owen Williams and George Nicholls for a project that is just as keen on melodic hooks while drawing playfully from wider interests in post-punk, garage rock and pastoral folk. "Illusion Pt II" is a deceptively buoyant album opener, Williams' speak-sung vocals offering an unromantic take on mental illness, while the jangly "Two Person Love", from last year's "Names" EP, buries a suspiciously harmonica-like riff in the mix. Album highlight "Sniveller" kicks off with Dry Cleaning-esque new wave swagger before unexpected backing vocals from JG's Lan McArdle deliver a heart-rush. **LISA-MARIE FERLA**

VELVET NEGRONI

Bulli

4AD

6/10

Hit-and-miss third from the missing link between Kanye and Bon Iver



Jeremy Nutzman's 2019 4AD debut was titled *Neon Brown*, which sounds like the name of the colour you get by mashing all the tubes in your plasticine set together. *Bulli* is a similar smooshing together of genres, from Animal Collective-style indie to dreamy Neptunian R&B, which often remains frustratingly inchoate. He's at his best on "Sinker", where urgent bass and digital cowbell brings Outkast-style funk, and "Ballad Smaller", which approaches the dreamy, abstract delirium of Prince circa "The Ballad Of Dorothy Parker". **STEPHEN TROUSSÉ**

VILLAGE OF THE SUN

First Light GEARBOX

8/10

Basement Jaxx founder immerses himself in the Brit-jazz scene



Sweet Baboo: pets and pot plants



Simon Ratcliffe seriously downplayed his jazz roots while he was a member of Basement Jaxx, but inspired by a

connection with tenor saxophonist Binker Golding and drummer Moses Boyd, he seems to have reimmersed himself in the UK jazz scene. Playing piano, synth, bass and harp, Ratcliffe teases out something more varied than anything Binker & Moses have recorded as a duo. "Village Of The Sun" is ambient jazz in a mutating time signature; "The Spanish Master" takes Dizzy Gillespie's Cubop into ecstatic territory; while other tracks get deep into the modal, spiritual jazz of Alice Coltrane and Pharoah Sanders, with Golding in wonderfully ruminative form. **JOHN LEWIS**

WILDES

Other Words Fail Me AWAL

7/10

Young Londoner starts over



With a jagged guitar riff and snarl at some "bitter memories ... sitting like a lump in my throat", Ella "Wildes" Walker is in fighting form right from the opening notes of her debut album. Once pitched as a teenage streaming sensation with sync deals and a pretty, piano-backed Dylan cover, the Londoner has reclaimed the rights to her music and found the power of her voice. Walker's vocals are mesmerising – simmering with controlled rage on "Woman In Love", aching and elegant on "Flames" and holding their own against St Francis Hotel's glimmering pop production on the likes of "Far And Wide" – while some musical magic from The Flaming Lips turns album closer "True Love" into a dreamy, luscious feast of a song. **LISA-MARIE FERLA**

JAMES YORKSTON, NINA PERSSON & THE SECOND HAND ORCHESTRA

The Great White Sea Eagle

DOMINO

8/10

Second from Fife folk veteran and Swedish collective, plus Cardigan



Nina Persson adds clean, open vocal optimism to James Yorkston's reedy grain on harmonies, easygoing duets and some leads, on songs crisp as winter sunlight. Yorkston intimately considers cycles of youth and age, "Keeping Up With The Grandchildren, Yeah" recounting a grandparent's fall ("I was scared, boys!") within an evocation of community and landscape. "A Sweetness In You" pays affecting tribute to Frightened Rabbit's Scott Hutchison, holding out an empathetic hand over elegiac violin and harmonium. Inevitable sorrows and burdens anchor the limpidly airy arrangements. **NICK HASTED**

MOGWAI

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| WED DEC 21 | SCOTLAND | EDINBURGH | USHER HALL * |
| THU DEC 22 | SCOTLAND | GLASGOW | BARROWLAND BALLROOM * |
| FRI DEC 23 | SCOTLAND | GLASGOW | BARROWLAND BALLROOM ▲ |

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| MON FEB 06 | ENGLAND | LONDON | THE GARAGE x | } <i>The Garage</i> 30TH BIRTHDAY SHOWS |
| TUE FEB 07 | ENGLAND | LONDON | THE GARAGE * | |

EXTRA DATE ADDED
THU FEB 09

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| TUE FEB 14 | ENGLAND | GATESHEAD | SAGE GATESHEAD ■ |
| WED FEB 15 | ENGLAND | NOTTINGHAM | ROCK CITY ■ |
| THU FEB 16 | ENGLAND | BATH | THE FORUM ■ |
| FRI FEB 17 | WALES | CARDIFF | GREAT HALL ■ |
| SAT FEB 18 | ENGLAND | BRIGHTON | BRIGHTON DOME ■ |
| SUN FEB 19 | ENGLAND | CAMBRIDGE | CORN EXCHANGE ■ |
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REISSUES | COMPS | BOXSETS | LOST RECORDINGS

NEW ORDER

Low-Life (Definitive Edition)

WARNERMUSIC

More cowbell! More frogs! Morricone! Rubber! New Order enter their imperial phase. *By Damien Love*

IT is May 14, 1984, and as the UK Margaret Thatcher would like to see remoulded in her image tears itself apart, New Order are doing their bit on the angels' side, playing a benefit at London's Royal Festival Hall in support of the nation's striking miners.

At the climax, they unveil a song no-one has ever heard before, one they're still writing there on stage, jamming with their sequencers. In time, this track will grow exponentially, to become the launchpad for the next chapter of their eternally unlikely career; a track that exploits and expands the possibilities of the 12" single even more than "Blue Monday"; a track so endlessly, ever-changingly glorious you could live inside it, or at least lose a lifetime's worth of weekends there. And its name is... and its name is... and its name is... "This one's a new song," Bernard Sumner says as he steps to the mic. "It's called 'I've Got A Cock Like The M1'."

As ever with New Order at their finest, the sublime and the ridiculous, heaven and earth, danced in close proximity at the messy birth of the song we would eventually come to know as "The Perfect Kiss", signature track and – controversially, in those indier-than-thou days – lead single of their magnificent third LP, *Low-Life*.

Now getting the augmented deluxe treatment as the

REISSUE
OF THE
MONTH
9/10

group's exemplary series of "definitive" boxsets continues, it is clearer than ever that this shimmering, shadowy, grimy album, released in spring 1985, marked the commencement of their imperial phase. If 1983's miraculous *Power, Corruption And Lies* was the moment New Order put it all together – all that pre-punk and punk and post-punk and kling-klang electro and ambience and rage and sadness and joy and confused, knowing naivete – *Low-Life* was where they set out to see how far they could take it.

In the time between the two albums, the group's individual members had been stretching their studio technique, taking on a wild variety of producing jobs for other Factory Records acts, testing gear and ideas while searching for the perfect beat on other people's records. They brought it all back home on *Low-Life*. Recorded in the dark, dying winter months of 1984,

it is a record where individual influences are readily apparent, yet get set spinning in that perfect balance that becomes something else altogether.

Musically, inspirations include both the new club sounds New Order kept chasing, and the beloved old soundtrack LPs they cherished: "The Perfect Kiss" itself starts as an attempt to replicate Shannon's "Let The Music Play", then becomes a joyride through a gleaming, ➤



Diving into London's
mid-'80s subculture:
New Order with their
manager Rob Gretton
(second right)





Raging with the machines: Barney and Hooky on stage

SLEEVE NOTES

CD 1 Original Album

Tracks 1-8

CD 2: Extras

1 Love Vigilantes - TV Pitch Instrumental Edit (mono)
2 The Perfect Kiss - Writing Session Recording
3 Untitled No. 1 - Writing Session Recording
4 Sunrise - Instrumental Rough Mix **
5 Elegia - Full Length *
6 Sooner Than You Think - Album Session Unedited
7 Sub-Culture - Album Session Early Instrumental Version
8 Face Up - Writing

Session Recording

9 Let's Go - Album Session Instrumental
10 Untitled No. 2 - Writing Session Recording
11 Sunrise - Writing Session Recording
12 Love Vigilantes - Writing Session Recording
13 Sooner Than You Think - Writing Session Recording
14 Skullcrusher - Demo
All tracks previously unreleased except * and ** (previously unreleased on CD and Digital)

DVD 1

The Koseinenkin Hall, Tokyo, Japan 1985
Tracks 1-9
The Rotterdam Arena,

Netherlands 1985

Tracks 10-21
Manchester Whistle Test, The Hacienda 1985
Tracks 22-23
24 Face Up - Restored using available footage from The Hacienda December 1985 and July 1985

DVD 2

The Manhattan Club, Leuven, Belgium 1985
Tracks 1-12
The International Centre, Toronto, Canada 1985
Tracks 13-25
Rehearsal Room, Cheetham Hill, Manchester 1985
26 The Perfect Kiss

crime-infested *Metropolis* and out into the misty radioactive swamplands beyond, full of mutant funk frogs and laughing sheep. Conversely, "Face Up" begins like an ominous *Blade Runner* city fanfare, then gets hijacked by a sprightly Hi-NRG gang with "Temptation" tattooed across their knuckles.

The most persistent influence is Italian maestro Ennio Morricone, the album's deity, whose revolutionary scores for Sergio Leone infect half of the eight tracks, most obviously New Order's own unapologetic spaghetti western showdown, "Elegia". (The semi-legendary 17-minute original cut, created in one relentless, well-fuelled 24-hour session because they'd been given free studio time, is among the extras, replete with admirably absurd cameos from the engineer's passing nephews, stating their names for no reason.)

The most unexpected influence, however, is the band New Order were, as "Sunrise" - a raging argument with God, and another touched by the hand of Morricone - becomes the closest thing to a Joy Division song they've ever done. Perhaps, by this stage, they felt confident enough that they'd chased the last of the wrong sort of JD fans away to let that holy ghost back out; although they throw in another of Sumner's most entirely-not-Ian-Curtis lyrics into "Face Up" just to make sure: "Your hair was long, your eyes was blue/Guess what I'm going to do to you... whoo!"

As outlined by writer Jude Rogers in the book accompanying the set, other, external forces also shaped *Low-Life*. For one, the general pre-Orwellian feeling in the air as 1984 dragged to a toxic close. For another, the atmosphere of pressure being released in the underground London clubs where New Order spent their nights during recording, notably infamous leather-and-rubber fetish joint Skin Two: "This Time Of Night", "The Perfect Kiss" and the album's second single

"Subculture" all soundtrack fascinated night-trawls through a decadent demimonde.

Simultaneously, the effort underway to break the band overground in America, via their implausible deal with Quincy Jones's boutique, Warners-offshoot label Qwest (whose other big signing that year was Frank Sinatra), fed the decision to do such decidedly un-New Order-y things as include singles on the album, and feature their photographs on the sleeve. It is difficult now to convey the sheer sense of heresy this unleashed among the most heavily overcoated sections of the John Peel nation in 1985, yet it resulted in the most flawlessly New Order-y solutions.

Clad in its fragile second skin of translucent tracing paper, Peter Saville's cover was his most beautiful object yet, framing his portraits of the group, shot on black-and-white Polaroid, like stills from a lost Dreyer movie. Meanwhile, the dilemma of having singles on the LP was circumvented by making those singles sound nothing like the album tracks: "Sub-culture" was radically re-sung and remixed into an amped-up Hamburg-harpsichord disco beast; while *Low-Life*'s truncated "Perfect Kiss" edit played like a trailer that only hinted at the grandeur of the 12" released the same week. To further the confusion, the "Perfect Kiss" video, recorded live in New Order's practice room, featured

yet another version again, although this hardly mattered as, at over 10 minutes, practically no TV station ever played it - another perfectly Factory promotional tool.

Directed by Jonathan Demme, fresh from *Stop Making Sense*, and exquisitely photographed by veteran cinematographer Henri Alekan, who shot *La Belle Et La Bête* for Cocteau and chased Audrey Hepburn through *Roman Holiday*, that majestic monster of a promo



HOW TO BUY...

VIDEODROME

"I wish you'd applaud louder..." Highlights from the *Low-Life* set's live footage

Tokyo, 1985 (DVD 1)

Previously released as *Pumped Full Of Drugs*, this show from the band's first tour of Japan finds them battling new gear and unanticipated cultural differences, as the audience claps politely after each song, then sits in complete silence until the next. But the mounting frustration feeds a demonic energy. Opener "Confusion" rarely sounded better.

Manchester, 1985 (DVD 1)

Filmed as a live drop-in for the BBC's weekly music show *Whistle Test*, this is only three tracks (and the last is partially reconstructed from un-broadcast footage), but it's an invaluable snapshot of New Order playing at home in their club, the Hacienda, in its pre-acid days. The Velvets-y "As It Is When It Was" wouldn't be released until the following year's *Brotherhood*.

Toronto, 1985 (DVD 2)

There are other great, pro-shot concerts included, from Belgium and the Netherlands, but this rough-and-ready document, filmed with a single video camera from the side of the stage, is the most intimate, and showcases just how hard New Order work on stage. Also precious for preserving the most debatable pair of shorts Bernard Sumner ever sported.



Q&A

Stephen Morris and Peter Hook: "We went out a lot..."

What's the abiding memory of being in the studio making *Low-Life*?

STEPHEN MORRIS: Being in the studio... waiting to go out.

PETER HOOK: We were living in London again to record. It was always a great escape to get down there.

SM: We wanted Britannia Row where we'd done *Power, Corruption And Lies*, but it was booked, so we ended up in the old Decca studio – Jam, it was called then, near Finsbury Park. Nice little studio.

PH: We were living in a house by Hyde Park, next to Princess Margaret's. A bit run down, a bit shitty. Suited us perfectly.

SM: Thing was, there were a lot of distractions in London. We went out a lot. Which gave us a lot of inspiration. But also meant we didn't start quite on time. You always start off saying, "Oh, we're going to start nine in the morning, and finish nine at night, and that means we can go out..." Then you'd go out at 9pm and not get back in until three. So you didn't start until one the next day. Pretty soon, you're going out without the window to do the work in.

PH: I went running round Hyde Park every morning, and the others would struggle to join me. I was full of energy in those days. Rob Gretton would collapse at the gates after 20 yards, Gillian would last another 20 yards. Then we'd drive to the studio, after myriad arguments along the lines of: "Why aren't you fuckers ready? Why did you say we'd leave at 10?"

SM: But we started off with the best of intentions. I can remember being in the studio and doing a lot of work.

Fair to say that this nightlife – especially your discovery of *Skin Two* – influenced the record?

PH: Tracks like "This Time Of Night", "Sunrise", "Sub-culture" were very inspired by what we'd seen in *Skin Two*. We tried to bring that underground

feel out in the music, the louche feel of London at the time, all those clubs – Taboo and the Kit-Kat Club, too. Our surroundings influenced us greatly. London did certainly affect that record as much as Manchester.

SM: Yeah, the up-all night-thing. Bernard was writing lyrics in the studio, and that had a lot to do with it. "Sub-culture" owes a lyrical debt to going to *Skin Two*. Like: "What the fuckin'ell's this place?" Er, it was either that, or – well, we had to drive through Regent's Park to get to the studio. But I don't think it was the zoo that did it.

PH: Those nights in *Skin Two* were fucking wild. We were just voyeurs watching the goings-on. There was a darkness that we were able to monopolise. It all added to the atmosphere, which was actually quite nice, and – it has to be said – safe. We didn't count having your bottom smacked as violence then. It was kind of a noble thing to do. Especially if you were a politician.



Tight spots: S&M club mag *Skin Two* and (below) one of the band's five battered Prophet-5 keyboards

Do you have fond memories of the technology you were using back then?

SM: The stuff we used to record *Power, Corruption & Lies* and *Low-Life* was very, very unreliable live.

PH: It was a fucking nightmare. I'd be driving round, taking synths all over each city we played in, to be fixed. We had five Prophet-5s, four sequencers. And none of them worked. We took to banging the Emulator on the leg.

SM: We got new stuff just after



"We tried to bring out the louche feel of London at the time, all those clubs" PETER HOOK

Low-Life. Much better, but still difficult, because you were supposed to just keep it in a studio, not take it on the road. What were we thinking?

Were you genuinely reluctant to include singles on the album?

SM: Of course. I could understand people saying, "Pah, selling out!" Ever since Joy Division, it had been: singles are singles; an album is a completely different thing.

PH: When we were Joy Division, we spoke about things we hated, and one was that a band would release a single, then put it on the album, and you'd have the track twice. Ian Curtis in particular thought it was a dirty way of taking advantage of fans.

SM: Our first bit of compromising. But then both singles were radically different from what was on the album. So, if you're going to do something, then do it differently.

How do you remember the "Perfect Kiss" shoot?

SM: It was [late *Factory* film sage] Michael Shamberg's idea to get Jonathan Demme, and he got Henri Alekan, Cocteau's lighting cameraman – so then we're going to do it in a shithole: our rehearsal room up on Cheetham Hill, which wasn't exactly renowned for its atmosphere.

PH: It was a former gas showroom, where they used to fix gas cookers. It had nine skylights, and Jonathan wanted all the skylights out, so he could film from above. Which didn't get used. So we took the skylights out, and the whole thing was lit up like a Hollywood movie set. Which drew every scumbag in Salford to it like the fucking Star Of Bethlehem. We got robbed for months after. In the end, we had to concrete over the skylights. Never saw daylight in there again.

Was there much discussion about using your photographs for the sleeve?

SM: It was kind of sprung on us. Peter Saville's concept was to "de-mystify" the band. He knew us quite well, and realised that if all four of us were in the same room, he wouldn't get a photograph of any of us, because we'd all be taking the piss. So we had to go one at a time.

PH: Everybody was moaning about us not having our pictures on records – particularly the Americans: "Hey, man, the personality's not coming through." We'd be saying, "We don't want our fucking personalities to come through. Have you met us?"

SM: No money changed hands, but Peter was particularly taken with the picture of me, so I ended up on front. When the CD came out with card inserts, you could have whoever you wanted on the front. For a while, I'd go to HMV and find they'd put Bernard as the cover. So I had to go in and change them all while no-one was looking. **INTERVIEW: DAMIEN LOVE**



GONG

Magick Brother (reissue, 1970)

BYG

8/10

Galaxy quest: the years are kind to cosmic adventurers' tentative debut. *By Jim Wirth*

HELPFULLY offering the disaffected acid heads of 1970 a reason to keep believing, Daevid Allen sang on the title track of his

first LP: “If you’re feeling rather lonely and you wonder where you are, maybe you’re one of many from a faraway star”.

A cosmic voyager every bit as far out there as Hawkwind, the footloose Australian ex-window dresser was the wrong side of 30 by the time he got to record *Magick Brother*. He and his

space-whispering partner Gilli Smyth made up for lost time by pushing their psychedelic boat out that little bit further than most, Gong’s Aquarian Age vision coalescing into a surrealist pseudo-philosophy peopled by little green men from the Planet Gong sent to raise the consciousness of the world.

Allen had recorded one single with London freak-out faves the Soft Machine (1967 banger “Love Makes Sweet Music”) before he was forced to quit, refused re-entry into Britain following a European tour for visa reasons. However, as he and Smyth settled in Paris, his old band a *cause célèbre* among intense French

radicals, Allen was invited to make a record by maverick jazz label BYG, featuring a cast of passing jazzers and future Gong stalwarts like reeds man Didier Malherbe.

Circumstances were not ideal; Allen wrote that the studio *Magick Brother* was recorded in was “so out of date that it might as well

have been a 13-track movie camera”, and he also managed to accidentally pull one of his front teeth out while stripping the insulation from a cable during the recording of his vocals, somewhat blurring the sibilance in his singing.

Perhaps that occasionally wobbly enunciation suits a record which has a softness around its edges, the acoustic flutter of the title track a gentle call to arms as Allen sings: “You’re born on this planet now to help to show the way, to stop the spread of darkness and to sing the Golden Age”. Raising consciousness further, “Change The World”/“Rational Anthem” concludes with a slab of hippie doggerel from one of Allen’s Deià pals Thomas Cedergren asserting: “We’ve waited too long for peace and love”, while the martial “Chainstore Chant” counts the costs of straight-world consumerism in “pockets full of blood”.

However, if Allen and friends had viewed the Paris Événements of 1968 at close quarters, he was not calling for revolution just yet. Instead, *Magick Brother* calls for self-realisation: get out there and change yourself. Speckled with unexpected harmonies, “Hope You Feel OK” is Allen’s one-man “She’s Leaving Home”, while “Ego” – “Grantchester



In terms of Pot-Head Pixie lore, it is incomplete but joyfully ramshackle

Meadows" Floyd with extra pub singalong vibes – invites the willing to "leave the merry-go-round and go".

The Pot-Head Pixies make their first appearance on record amid the Jesus & Mary Chain guitars and proto-Ziggy Stardust swagger of "Gong Song" before things take a darker turn. "Princess Dreaming" is a nightmare landscape of Can alienation noise and Kraftwerk flute. Nasty nursery rhyme "Five And Twenty Schoolgirls" stabs impatiently at the fabric of reality ("mother's in a coma from drinking too much soma", Allen sings), while the album dissolves into abstraction with closer "Cos You Got

Green Hair", Malherbe's out-of-body flute mapping out terrain Gong would explore further once they had evolved into the "seaside funband" of their founder's dreams.

"We ran out of time and money,"

Allen remembered of *Magick Brother*, but later incarnations of Gong would loot the LP for parts; the vocal drone from "Cos You Got Green Hair" reappears on "Selene" from 1971's thunderous *Camembert Electrique*, while Smyth's "Pretty Miss Titty" poem resurfaces midway through Gong's Steve Hillage-powered *Radio Gnome Invisible Trilogy* on *Angel's Egg's* "Prostitute Poem".

However, if *Magick Brother* is a back-of-a-Rizla sketch of the Gong masterplan, some of its charm comes from ideas Allen didn't immediately come back to; his ear for a dopey pop song, his knack for churchy harmonies. In terms of Pot-Head Pixie lore, it is an incomplete revelation, but it's also joyfully ramshackle, Allen's lyrics impish and smart. If Pulp or Orange Juice were starved into making a psychedelic rock LP, it would have sounded a lot like this. Later incarnations of Gong have a musical muscle this early prototype cannot match, but *Magick Brother's* little star twinkles brightly regardless.

Extras: 7/10. Both sides of 1970's "Est-ce Que Je Suis?" single. The A-side is a *jolie-laide* monster, Allen's gender-bending Franglais lyrics larded with Smyth's madwoman down from the attic caterwauling. Flipside "Hip Hypnotise You" takes the aggro prog mood further, with themes that would re-emerge on Gong's "Mr Longshanks" and the *Continental Circus* soundtrack.

SLEEVE NOTES

SIDE 1

- 1 Mystic Sister – Magick Brother
- 2 Change The World
- 3 Glad To Sad To Say
- 4 Chain Store Chant – Pretty Miss Titty
- 5 Fredfish – Hope You Feel OK

SIDE 2

- 1 Ego
- 2 Gong Song
- 3 Princess Dreaming
- 4 5 & 20 Schoolgirls
- 5 Cos You've Got Green Hair

Produced by:

Pierre Lattès

Recorded at:

Studio ETA & Studio Europa

Sonor, Paris

Personnel:

Daavid Allen (vocals, guitar, bass, semprini, crystal ball), Gilli Smyth (vocals, space whisper), Didier Malherbe (flute, saxophone), Rachid Houari (tabla, drums), Earl Freeman (contrabass), Burton Greene (piano, piano harp), Barre Phillips (contrabass), Tamsin Smyth (vocals)

AtoZ

This month...

- P44 CLUSTER
- P45 LIGHTSHIPS
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- P46 PEGGY LEE
- P48 THEMETERS
- P50 YOKO ONE
- P50 MARTIN REV
- P51 BOZ SCAGGS

ALABAMA SHAKES Boys & Girls: 10th Anniversary Deluxe Edition

ROUGH TRADE

10/10

Expanded reissue of the group's dynamite debut



Who can forget the thrill on first hearing Brittany Howard's voice on "Hold On", the explosive opening

track on Alabama Shakes' 2012 debut? Sounding like an implausible, intense amalgam of all the best bits of Janis Joplin and Amy Winehouse, it's one of those visceral moments that lives forever – and a decade on, *Boys & Girls* still sounds like a contender for the best soul-blues-rock-boogie record of the millennium so far.

Extras: 9/10. A second disc featuring a ferocious 2012 live performance on the LA radio show *Morning Becomes Eclectic*. Recorded prior to the album's release, incendiary versions of eight of its tracks are augmented by three non-album songs. The impassioned, hook-laden "Always Alright" from the soundtrack of the movie *Silver Linings Playbook* is the best of them, but the frantic, barrelling '50s-style rockers "Heavy Chevy" and "Mama" (both originally heard on a 7" bonus EP), are completely irresistible too.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

ROLAND WEHRAUCH/DPA

Q&A

Sax-man Didier Malherbe on the birth of a psychedelic institution

How did you meet Daavid?

In spring 1968, I saw a Soft Machine concert at Palais de Sport, as a trio with Robert Wyatt, Kevin Ayers and Mike Ratledge, and the next day I met Daavid. A German actor called Hans who was in the Living Theatre introduced me. We went to a camping place in Paris and Daavid told me a lot of stories about Planet Gong, and the Submarine Captain and the Pot-Head Pixies, and I came over with my flute and we played music together for a few hours – it was brilliant.

Magick Brother was recorded in Autumn 1969; do you consider it a Gong album?

It's not a Gong album; it's a Daavid Allen album. It's kind

of Gong, but Gong was not properly open yet. I was playing only flute and I didn't play on that many songs on *Magick Brother*. It was a rough almost kind of naïve music. Daavid was a very soft person with a soft voice but at the same time he had a revolutionary attitude.

"Est-Ce Que Je Suis?" was recorded a few months later but sounds completely different.

Daavid could have had a solo career like Kevin Ayers did – he might have made more money – but he was involved in community living and improvisation, and that's why he created Gong. Gong starts when we are a live band, when we are a mix of Daavid's voice, the space whisper of Gilli, free jazz stuff and some pataphysical behaviour, because Daavid was fond of French culture and he was appreciated in Paris for his special humour. It was funny and a bit crazy. **INTERVIEW: JIM WIRTH**



Didier Malherbe: "It was an almost naïve music"

Alabama Shakes: 10 years after



BOG SHED The Official Bog-Set MELODIC 8/10

Flush life: complete works of the kings of '80s wonk



Nettled at being lumped in with the “shambling” C86 bands, Bog Shed showed their Thatcher-era Magic Band chops with a note-perfect rendition of Benny Hill’s “Gather In The Mushrooms” for a 1986 John Peel Session. It’s about the only recording of the awkward foursome that doesn’t feature on this five-disc set, which incorporates their two-and-a-half LPs, almost complete BBC output and plenty more besides. Merseyside ‘social surrealists’ who lived in bucolic squalor near Hebden Bridge, Bog Shed specialised in Fall-ultra clatter, “Oily Stack”, “Excellent Girl” and the immortal “Fat Lad Exam Failure” exemplifying frontman Phil Hartley’s grotesque gifts. They split in 1988, bandmates only realising Hartley had died (of cancer, in 2006) when they asked the PRS why their tiny royalty cheques had stopped coming. *The Official Bog-Set* offers little help in fathoming Bog Shed’s perverse lyrics, but plentiful live bonuses soundtrack the one-time Roy North Penis Band’s successful mission to evade mainstream approval. Nimble, ugly: anything but bog standard.
Extras: 7/10. Bonus tracks, live cuts.
JIM WIRTH

CHEAP TRICK Live At The Whisky 1977 REAL GONE 9/10

Four wild live shows from Illinois boys' LA stand



Cheap Trick’s five-show stand at LA’s Whisky A Go Go in early June 1977 found the group playing at their peak. They’d already recorded and released their self-titled debut, and were busy making its successor, *In Color*. If that

album was a tidier affair, live Cheap Trick was still a fearsome prospect, something KISS would soon find out – the Whisky shows were also prep for their supporting slot on that group’s tour. Four of the shows are here: ferocious yet disciplined, they document Cheap Trick revitalising early songs like “ELO Kiddies”, introducing future classics like “High Roller”, and on songs like “Oh Candy”, firing a rocket up power-pop’s retro-twee fundament. The pop sheen and comedy pomp of later albums like *Dream Police* have their charms, but this is Cheap Trick at their purest: a fierce, streamlined rock’n’roll gang.
Extras: 6/10. Liners from Ken Sharp, ‘bootleg’ packaging.
JONDALE

ERIC CLAPTON The Complete Reprise Studio Albums Volume II REPRISE 6/10 *Slowhand's solid but unspectacular late-career offerings*



It wouldn’t be outrageous to suggest Clapton’s 21st-century output has been more polite than envelope-pushing, but it does include two lively labour-of-love albums celebrating a blues hero. *Reptile*, from 2001, benefits from guest players Billy Preston and The Impressions, and well-chosen covers (Stevie Wonder, Ray Charles); however the guitarist sounds more engaged on the brace of Robert Johnson tributes that followed it, *Me And Mr Johnson* and *Sessions For Robert J*. Half of 2005’s *Back Home* suffers from the pedestrian originals co-written with Simon Climie, and only really comes to life on old mate George Harrison’s “Love Comes To Everyone”. *Clapton* (2010) is a curate’s egg courtesy of its Great American Songbook selections from the dusty catalogues of Hoagy Carmichael, Irving Berlin and Johnny Mercer, but Allen Toussaint’s New Orleans piano gives a handful of tracks a welcome boost.
Extras: 6/10. Eight harder-to-find recordings, including B-sides and



Cluster in Munich, 1971

tracks released as bonuses on overseas versions of the parent albums.
TERRY STAUNTON

CLUSTER Cluster II (reissue, 1972) BUREAU B 8/10 *Deep, cosmic synth slurry – the core Cluster duo's first full pass back on vinyl*



By the time of *Cluster II*, the titular group had been carved down to a duo, after losing Conrad Schnitzler several years prior, back when they were called Kluster, and then more recently consigning Conny Plank to production duties. But the music on *Cluster II* still echoes with the improvisatory freedom that Hans-Joachim Roedelius and Dieter Moebius explored with Kluster, and earlier still, the Zodiac Free Arts Lab, where they’d hung out with soon-to-be members of Guru Guru, Tangerine Dream, and Ash Ra Tempel. Caught in the maw of krautrock and kosmische, the six pieces here are ludic and revelatory, even as you can hear the duo pinning their improvisations to cyclical structures. There are fuzzed-out guitars spilling out circular riffs (see the glorious “Im Süden”), blurry, indistinct frozen tundras of electronics, and great chugging pulsations that ride the railways into the blue-and-yellow starscape of the album’s cover.
Extras: None. JONDALE

COIL Queens Of The Circulating Library (reissue, 2000) DAIS 7/10 *First vinyl rerelease of drone odyssey*

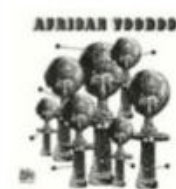


One person’s eerie, ambient meditation is another’s patience-testing maundering, but the haunting beauty of this 49-minute, single-track release has likely already found favour with fans of Brian Eno, Steve Reich and Jóhann Jóhannsson. Released at the turn of the millennium, it’s one of three Coil albums from the same year and is the work of Thighpaulsandra and John Balance (Peter “Sleazy” Christopherson

isn’t credited), with guest Dorothy Lewis, the former’s mother and an opera singer. It’s her (treated) recitation of a poem written by Balance that occurs early on, before the piece resumes its journey of hypnotic, endlessly undulating synthesiser/keys waves with a sweet, bell-like resonance. Active listening reveals subtle breaks within the repetition, namely the gentle stuttering and reverberative, deep-space pings that occur at the 31-33-minute mark, their impact intensified further by the weightless calm around them.
Extras: None. SHARON O’CONNELL

MANU DIBANGO African Voodoo (reissue, 1972) MUSIC BOX PUBLISHING 9/10

How the Cameroonian sax player's "Afropean" funk helped birth rare groove and disco too



In the early ’70s, Manu Dibango had, for all intents and purposes, a brand new bag. The Cameroonian saxophonist and bandleader created his own “Afropean” sound by fusing African and Latin traditions and rhythms, French soul, and the funk and R&B of James Brown, Stax/Volt and Motown. With that bag in hand, Dibango changed the course of dance music when his 1972 instrumental “Soul Makossa” become a staple in the discothèques then beginning to proliferate worldwide. The latest in Music Box Publishing’s Dibango reissue series, *African Voodoo* anticipates that breakthrough with a set of instrumentals that are as irresistible and as they are inventive. Recorded in Paris in 1971 and created as ready-made accompaniments for adverts, television shows and films in Africa, the songs here are tighter than the more sprawling jams of Fela Kuti or TP Orchestre Poly-Rythmo de Cotonou emerging in the same era. Yet thanks to Dibango’s versatility and restless creativity (the acid-rock stylings of “Jungle Riders” is another surprise), these tracks remain fluid and funky as all get out.
Extras: 7/10. New liner notes with Dibango interview from 2008.
JASON ANDERSON



RICHARDE AARON/REDFERNS



LIGHTSHIPS

Electric Cables

(reissue, 2012)

GEOGRAPHIC

8/10

Now on vinyl, the 10-year-old, self-effacing solo venture from ex-Teenage Fanclub bassist.

By Alastair McKay



WHEN it comes to putting himself forward, Gerard Love is – if not exactly backward – elliptical at least. For his first solo album,

released in 2012 on The Pastels' imprint Geographic, he chose not to issue the music under a recognisable brand. "I wasn't comfortable with using my name," he says. "If there was merchandise, somebody walking around with a T-shirt with my name on it would be weird. My name kinda belongs to my parents, it's not my choice. Also I didn't want to bring too much attention to myself."

The other reason for Love's coyness was that he didn't want to undermine Teenage Fanclub, for whom he wrote such classics as "Sparky's Dream" and "Ain't That Enough". But at that point the pace of the band had slowed, and when Love was offered an outlet for his extra-curricular urges it wasn't clear when or whether they would emerge from hibernation.

Now that Love is no longer a member of Teenage Fanclub, having elected not to commit to an international tour in 2019, it's tempting to see Lightships as the first step to a solo career. That's misleading in several directions at once. Neither

Love, not Teenage Fanclub, have taken a career-oriented approach to their music, and that doesn't look likely to change any time soon. More pertinently, when he conceived Lightships, Love still saw the Fanclub as his central focus, and even recorded the autumnal *Shadows* in the middle of laying down *Electric Cables*.

While Love was in Teenage Fanclub, the group gave the illusion of stability. With three exploratory songwriters, they pulled in different directions while also displaying a unity of purpose. They were like The Beatles with three George Harrisons. Yet, while he was responsible for some of Teenage Fanclub's best-loved songs, Love played bass and saw his role in the group as being structural and supportive. In Lightships, Love plays guitar, and his interest in the textural qualities of the instrument replaces the Fanclub's Quo gene with something less dogmatic. Love, who claims to be "not much of a guitarist" eschews chords for the most part, concentrating on arpeggios, adding atmosphere with tremolo and delays.

The basic tracks were recorded in Norfolk on Teenage Fanclub's equipment, and Tom Crossley (flute, glockenspiel, pipes for Lightships) also does a bit of

SLEEVE NOTES

- 1 Two Lines
- 2 Muddy Rivers
- 3 Sweetness In Her Spark
- 4 Every Blossom
- 5 Silver And Gold
- 6 The Warmth Of The Sun
- 7 Girasol
- 8 Stretching Out
- 9 Photosynthesis
- 10 Sunlight To The Dawn

Produced by: Gerard Love and Bal Cooke
Recorded at: Leeders Farm, Norfolk, and La Chunky, Glasgow
Personnel: Gerard Love, (vocals, guitars, keyboards), Dave McGowan (guitars, vocals), Bob Kidea (bass), Tom Crossley (flute, glockenspiel, pipes), Brendan O'Hare (drums, percussion), Jim McCulloch (clarinet), Bal Cooke (synthesiser, percussion)

light colouring on the Love-penned opening track of *Shadows*, "Sometimes I Don't Need To Believe In Anything". That song shows the contrast between Teenage Fanclub and Love's solo work. The Fanclub tune is like a tidal swell, gaining strength as it builds. The sound of Lightships, as the name suggests, is more fleeting, but no less persuasive in the way it directs the listener through emotional undercurrents. Twinkly and soft are the words Love uses to describe it, in a way which suggests that future projects may aim to up the voltage.

What about the songs? An air of gentle psychedelia pervades, nothing druggy, just a seasonal swirl of changing light, of late summer sunsets fading into autumn. "Sunlight, raincloud, seed", Love sings on "Photosynthesis", a concise summary of his metaphysical approach. There are hints of Spanish romance in the gentle infatuation of "Sweetness in Her Spark" (walks "through paseos in the burning street haze") and the stargazing loveliness of the spacey "Girasol". Detail is scant, but the album is awash with pastoral contentment.

Perhaps it's misleading to focus only on Teenage Fanclub. Love is also a long-term member of The Pastels, an underrated group whose sonic palette deepened over the years, and whose 2003 soundtrack to *The Last Great Wilderness* is also being reissued (Jarvis Cocker's guest appearance on "I Picked A Flower" is a highlight). A third Geographic re-release is the cracked Japanese improv of Maher Shalal Hash Baz's *Blues Du Jour*, which is wildly eclectic but shares the cunning naivety of The Pastels.

In Lightships, Love's contradiction is his assertive modesty. *Electric Cables* offers kaleidoscopic shifts on a defining image in which emotional engagement runs in parallel to the seasons. The words are pared, and though odd details remain – a Roman gate, an enterprise zone – the effect is as mistily hypnotic as the shipping forecast. At the end of the day in the twilight of the season, there is the soft power of "Sunlight To The Dawn", which finds contentment in a sunset reflected in a lover's eyes, "bright as the lighthouse to the shore/To guide and stabilise". For Love, the storm is over. General synopsis: good.

Q&A

Lightships' Gerard Love on "staying away from chords" and life outside Teenage Fanclub

How did Lightships differ from your work with Teenage Fanclub?

I was consciously trying to write in a different way. I knew I'd be playing guitar rather than bass, so I would have more control over the textures. I wanted to create a texture record, really.

What were the records that informed the sound?

Kind of soft psychedelia. There was a side project by one of the guys from Beachwood Sparks, Chris Gunst. It was called *Mystic Chords Of Memory*. They released two albums. One of those albums he made with Nobody, a remixer guy, and it was quite textured.

When can we expect new work from you?

I've tentatively booked some time in a

studio in February. I've started doing shows playing songs from my past in a soft setting, but I do plan to get to the studio with some of the people who made the Lightships record. I'm not intentionally trying to make a soft record this time. This time I want it to be more dynamic. I'm not saying it's going to be rock music. I don't know whether I'll call it Lightships. Maybe I'll keep Lightships as a twinkly soft thing. The first thing I'll do is make the record and then decide how to package it. **INTERVIEW: ALASTAIR MCKAY**

REVELATIONS



NICK GARRIE

The reappearance of a '60s cult/hot-air balloonist

As Nick Garrie admits, to describe his musical career as a stop-start affair would be an understatement. One revered cult album in the late '60s followed by a long hiatus before a brief reappearance under the pseudonym Nick Hamilton in the '80s – then another lengthy silence while he ran a hot-air ballooning business before he eventually re-emerged in 2009 with his first album of new songs in more than 20 years.

Summer Nights, recorded in an impromptu session shortly after the arrival of the new millennium, served

as a staging post to his full-time return.

"We were in a lovely village in north Portugal where we picked tomatoes," he says. "I was watching a guitarist in a local bodega when the owner – a fierce 80-year-old with a big stick – asked if I played. He pulled out a guitar from under the counter and I sang and it felt like I'd come home. Someone asked if I'd like to make a record, and we recorded in a block of flats with the local bus rattling round the corner. The album lay on my shelf until now, when someone wrote in asking to hear it..."

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

NICK GARRIE Summer Nights (The Lost Portuguese Session)

TAPETE

7/10

'Lost' acoustic album from obscure 1960s psych legend



Born in Yorkshire to a Russian father and Scottish mother, Garrie achieved belated cult status when his 1969 album

The Nightmare Of JB Stanislas was reissued more than 30 years after it was recorded and hailed as "the last great lost album of the '60s". Following its original release, Garrie recorded only sporadically while working as a teacher in France before his rediscovery led to a full return to music-making. *Summer Nights* was recorded ad hoc on holiday in Portugal at the invitation of a local bar owner shortly before his rediscovery and is a more modest archival unearthing than his 1960s psych-baroque classic. Nevertheless, it's a gorgeous collection of acoustic troubadour songs, the 1960s singer-

songwriter vibe given a more exotic world music/fado flavour by the ringing tones of the 12-string Portuguese guitar. The mood is romantic, the melodies engaging and Garrie's voice characterful, a combination as winning as it is timeless.

Extras: None.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

GIRLSCHOOL The School Report 1978–2008

CHERRY RED

7/10

NWOBHM trailblazers compiled



Girlschool's most high-profile success may have been a 1981 Top 5 hit with Motörhead on a cover of Johnny

Kidd's "Please Don't Touch", but the female four-piece frequently brought a touch of punk-tinged menace to what was dubbed the New Wave of British Heavy Metal. This five-disc set does a bang-up job in celebrating every string to their bow, including the more pub-rock elements of early recordings and a lusty embrace of glam (the

raucous cover of Bolan's "20th Century Boy" is a highlight). Second album *Hit And Run* has aged particularly well, its sneering attitude arguably the prototype for the likes of L7 and Hole, while 2004 reunion set *Believe* shows as much hunger as their formative years, especially the bluesy "Let's Get Hard".

Extras: 7/10. One disc of non-album singles and B-sides, and a live disc from 1978 when the band plied their trade under the name Painted Lady.

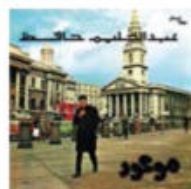
TERRY STAUNTON

ABDEL HALIM HAFEZ Mawood

WEWANTSOUNDS

8/10

First ever vinyl reissue for Egyptian superstar's 1971 release



Abdel Halim Hafez was a true superstar in his native Egypt: a movie star, singer, producer and heartthrob, he was so

adored that women flung themselves from balconies during his funeral following his untimely death in 1977. You get a sense of the esteem he was held in through a listen to *Mawood*. Recorded live, as was the custom of the day, it sets Hafez's sonorous, soulful voice against a backdrop of sumptuous strings, choir and percussion arranged by the composer Baligh Hamdi. In its day, *Mawood* – the title translates as "Promise" – must have sounded strikingly modern. Its lyrics, written by poet Mohamed Hamza, dwell on the pain of romantic love, while you can hear the influence of '70s soul surface in its racing organ grooves, guitarist Omar Korshid adding some mournful electric leads. The recording lacks a little in fidelity, but its live provenance gives you a sense of how Hafez's music was received: with an excitement that borders on frenzy.

Extras: 5/10. Sleeve notes.

LOUIS PATTISON

AHMAD JAMAL Emerald City Nights: Live At The Penthouse 1963–1964 (Vol 1)/Emerald City Nights: Live At The Penthouse 1965–1966 (Vol 2)

ELEMENTAL/JAZZ DETECTIVE

8/10, 8/10

Two live volumes of previously unreleased Seattle recordings



The Pittsburgh pianist and composer, now 92, is perhaps best known for his contributions to the development of cool jazz in the '50s, inspiring Miles Davis with his disciplined technique, spare yet imaginative style and graceful dynamics. These newly unearthed volumes spotlight Jamal in his classic trio setting with some of his frequent collaborators (bassists Jamil Nasser and Richard Evans, drummers Vernel Fournier, Chuck Lampkin and Frank Gant). Captured

on the reel-to-reel at the famed Seattle club, the performances are casually energetic and consistently enjoyable, a strong representation of a prime time in Jamal's career. There are no major revelations yet the music sparkles with lush tones and measured self-assurance, going down easy without sacrificing a bit of rhythmic range. The standout is a fantastic, nearly nine-minute rendition of the Jamal trademark "Poinciana" on Vol 2.

Extras: 8/10. Each set comes with an extensive booklet that includes rare photos, interviews and essays.

ANA GAVRILOVSKA

PEGGY LEE Norma Deloris Egstrom From Jamestown, North Dakota (reissue, 1972)

CAPITOL/UME

6/10

Prolific performer finally puts her name to her face



That the last of Lee's 30-plus Capitol albums often sounds like The Carpenters is signalled by her cover of Leon Russell's

"A Song For You", the title track of the duo's fourth album – released that same June 1972 – not to mention his "Superstar", which the brother/sister team made theirs a year earlier. Lee's versions suffer in comparison, her delivery, like their arrangements, unhelpfully ostentatious, and it's hard, too, to miss familiar ground in "Razor (Love Me As I Am)", a dead ringer for her signature song "Fever". But she belts out "When I Found You" with Broadway melodrama, claims "Love Song" from Elton John with a spirited performance and Bacharach-style orchestration, and her voice is caramel on the dramatic "Someone Who Cares" and smooth "It Takes Too Long To Learn To Live Alone".

Extras: 7/10. Seven bonus tracks, the highlight an album outtake, Snoopy Come Home's "It Changes".

WYNDHAM WALLACE



Ahmad Jamal: casually energetic

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Perú Selvático: Sonic Expedition Into The Peruvian Amazon 1972-1986

ANALOG AFRICA

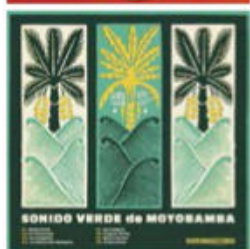
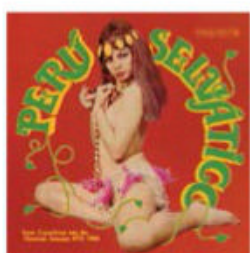
SONIDO VERDE DE MOYOBAMBA

Sonido Verde de Moyobamba

ANALOG AFRICA

9/10, 8/10

Cumbia Amazonica in excelsis. By Jason Anderson



ONE of the great things about an album like *Perú Selvático* is how it proves that the world is not just a more complicated place than one may presume, but a more surprising one too. Even devotees of the adventures in global crate-digging by

Analog Africa – the Frankfurt-based reissue label that grew out of a clubnight in Dakar hosted by a peripatetic collector named Samy Ben Redjeb – will be delighted and possibly disoriented by the (re)discoveries to be made on the label's latest compilations.

With *Perú Selvático*, Redjeb provides a new wealth of detail and texture to a story he began several releases ago, as Analog Africa's focus expanded beyond Congolese funk and Afrobeat deep cuts to South America. A 2020 set devoted to the heady and punchy brew of cumbia, Brazilian carimbo and florid psych rock by Raúl Llerena Vásquez aka Ranil, *Ranil y su Conjunto Tropical* highlighted the intense cross-pollination of sounds that were particular to Peru through the late '60s and '70s. Meanwhile, the 2021 comp *Trujillo: Perú 1961-1974* explored the rumblings spurred by Ranil's fellow Peruvian cumbia pioneer Berardo "Manzanita" Hernández after he turned the capital city of Lima onto the wilder style fostered by the overlapping Spanish, African and indigenous cultures in his coastal hometown of Trujillo.

Now we leave the city and the coast behind and head into the jungles and forests of the Amazon. Of course, things are hardly any simpler in these more secluded parts, especially once musicians in towns like Iquitos – which was also Ranil's base when not recording in Lima – got turned on to The Safaris and Jimi Hendrix and traded their accordions



Guitar paradise: Los Royal's de Pucallpa

for electric guitars and keyboards. The influence of all those new sounds from the northern hemisphere and the shift in technology compounded the complexity already rife in the region's mixing of Spanish colonialist and indigenous traditions and rhythms. Due to their relative isolation, musicians here were also further removed from trends more prominent in Lima, like the city folk's taste for Cuban big band. Thus did the Peruvian sound of chicha spawn a country cousin known as Cumbia Amazonica.

Nevertheless, it's impossible to trace all the currents and tributaries that run into a song as singular as Fresa Juvenil de Tarapoto's "La Palmerita" with its spellbinding shimmer of spidery guitar lines, cheery keyboard beeps and blurts, and woozy rhythms. Then there's the relative lushness of "Descarga Royal" by Los Royal's de Tingo Maria, which could be The Champs' "Tequila" if it were soaked in pisco instead. A manic marvel of fuzz-laden guitar and perky timbales, "Humo En La Selva" by Los Invasores de Progreso is another essential of the selections licensed from Discos Volcán, one of the two record labels that originally released the music collected on *Perú Selvático*.

The pesky matter of whether songs like these represent an authentic record of the music of this time and place is further muddled by the messy ways of the record business. Though eager to capitalise on the growing popularity of Amazonian cumbia thanks to Ranil (who gets two tracks here), companies like Volcán and Discos

Universal were nevertheless conscious of the costs of bringing groups from the region to record in Lima. Sometimes only a few band members were present for the recordings, the label then using local players as fill-ins. So how all this compares with how some bands may have sounded at a Friday-night dance in Tingo María is a question that must go unanswered. Even so, the comp's choices are savvy ones when it comes to conveying each act's signature qualities, whether it's the nervy yet fluid intensity of Los Zheros, Los Cinsnes' sprightly effervescence, or the more overtly rock-influenced abandon of Sonido Verde de Moyobamba.

A selection of eight songs culled from the band's five albums for Universal in the '80s, *Sonido Verde de Moyobamba* offers vivid proof of just how startling this blend of sounds and rhythms could be when placed in especially gifted hands. Appropriately bonkers given its horror-movie title, "La Danza Del Vampiro" combines bursts of villainous cackling with eerie organ sounds and plenty of burly guitar distortion provided by Leonardo Vela Rodriguez. A teenage prodigy who initially built his own guitars, Rodriguez had first come to Lima to record with Grupo Siglo XX de Rioja before forming his next band in 1980. Cutting through the swirl of organ and percussion on songs like "La Longuita" and "El Borracho", his playing equips this music with a formidable sense of drive and an edge of unpredictability, qualities it shares with so many of the treasures excavated for *Perú Selvático*.

SLEEVE NOTES

Perú Selvático – Sonic Expedition into the Peruvian Amazon 1972-1986

- 1 Los Royal's de Pucallpa – Descarga Royal
- 2 Sonido Verde de Moyobamba – La Cervicita
- 3 Los Zheros – Selva Virgen
- 4 Grupo Siglo XX de Rioja – Moyobambina
- 5 Los Invasores de Progreso – Humo En La Selva
- 6 Los Cisnes – La Hamaca
- 7 Fresa Juvenil de Tarapoto – Cumbion Universal
- 8 Los Rangers de Tingo Maria – La Trochita
- 9 Los Invasores de Progreso – La Bola Buche
- 10 Ranil y Su Conjunto Tropical – Bailando En El Infinito
- 11 Los Cisnes – Safari En La Selva
- 12 Ranil y Su Conjunto Tropical – Baila Bonito
- 13 Los Zheros – Alibaba
- 14 Fresa Juvenil de Tarapoto – La Palmerita
- 15 Sonido Verde de Moyobamba – Recordando A Aguaytia
- 16 Grupo Siglo XX de Rioja – El Pasito De Miriam
- 17 Los Cisnes – Río Mar
- 18 Los Zheros – La Uñita

Sonido Verde De Moyobamba

- 1 Melancolia
- 2 El Limoncito
- 3 La Longuita
- 4 La Danza Del Vampiro
- 5 Zarzamora
- 6 Alegria Verde
- 7 Maria Esther
- 8 El Borracho

Q&A

Samy Ben Redjeb of Analog Africa

When you were working on the label's earlier compilations of Peruvian cumbia, did you know you were just beginning your own Amazonian expedition?

The first time I went to Peru I didn't even know what I was looking for and ended up in the Amazon by coincidence after seeing the silkscreen cover of a certain Ranil from the city of Iquitos. My education in "Cumbia Amazonica" started there and continued a year later during my second trip to Peru when I discovered most of the bands on the compilation.

Why do you think Cumbia Amazonica developed so differently from what was happening in Lima and the coast?

While the West proclaimed itself as the navel of the musical world, the musicians down below were brewing a potpourri that most didn't know existed. The largest city of the Peruvian Amazon, Iquitos, is only reachable by plane or by boat, and what was happening there musically was a mystery until some curious producers went there to bring bands to Lima for recordings. Like myself, they must have been surprised to hear futuristic synth sounds mixed with Santana-like guitar sounds.

Do you think these musicians were particularly open to the influence of surf and psych they encountered from elsewhere in the world?

Most of the musicians of the Amazon listened to lots of Colombian cumbia, Ecuadorian sanjuanito and psych from Lima. So when the time came to modernise their own local beats they did it using the sounds they knew best. The instruments they used where those '60s guitars typically used by the band doing surf music in the States – the same goes with Angolan music. It might well be that sounding "surfy" was mainly a coincidence.

INTERVIEW: JASON ANDERSON

{ REDISCOVERED }

Uncovering the underrated and overlooked



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Artificial Intelligence (reissue, 1992)

WARP

8/10

Warp's definitive compilation back on vinyl for 30th anniversary



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE was not the first compilation Warp put out – that was *Pioneers Of The Hypnotic Groove*, a round-up of the Sheffield label's key early tracks, in May 1991. But 30 years on, it's the one that fans remember, largely because of its cultural impact. It helped define not just a new style of electronic music, bringing together self-taught misfits such as Aphex Twin, Autechre, Richie Hawtin and B12, but it also ushered in Warp's second phase which would come to shape the label's identity.

After the bleep techno boom with local heroes Forgemasters and LFO, Warp devoted its 1992-'94 *Artificial Intelligence* series of artist albums to a more abstract and graceful sound that had greater emotional resonance. This new kind of otherworldly computer music, created at home by like-minded dreamers from various countries, was designed for the head, not just the feet. For better or worse, the music's cerebral quality led to the coining of "intelligent dance music" – IDM – a label that stuck, particularly in the US.

With its tagline "*Artificial Intelligence* is for long journeys, quiet nights and club drowsy dawns", the album was among the first to acknowledge the listening habits of a new generation of casual ravers, as depicted in the sleeve by

Phil Wolstenholme: in a studenty living room, an android reclines in an armchair, spliff in hand, zoning out to a record, possibly *Autobahn* or *Dark Side Of The Moon* because these covers lie on the floor, next to the sleeve of the *Pioneers*... LP (also designed by Wolstenholme), a packet of Rizla and 20 Silk Cut. It's a corny image that conveys the concept perfectly: this new style of modern electronic music is intended for home listening; it should stimulate the mind, not only the body. Why not chill out to Polygon Window's *Surfing On Sine Waves* – released a month later in January '93 – as you might to Jean Michel Jarre, Tomita or Tangerine Dream?

So *Artificial Intelligence* may seem greater than the sum of its parts but the tracks hold up surprisingly well. Richard James, an intriguing figure after a run of fêted R&S releases, makes his first Warp appearance as

The Dice Man (with the sublime acid of "Polygon Window"), while early incarnations of B12 (*Musicology*) and The Black Dog (*IAO*) deliver cosmic sci-fi funk. The mangled boogie of Autechre's "The Egg" and "Crystal" hints at stranger things to come. Dutch producer Speedy J's fashions a weightless world from decompressed break-beats, while his Plus 8 label boss Richie Hawtin, trading as Up!, supplies the pumping "Spiritual High" which seems out of place. The Orb's Alex Patterson closes proceedings with the unravelling synthedelia of "Loving You Live", an extract from a live set. Three decades on, it's hard to improve this version of the future. Break open the time capsule.

Extras: None. First time on vinyl since 1992. **PIERS MARTIN**



JOHN COUGAR MELLENCAMP

Scarecrow (reissue, 1985)

MERCURY/UME

8/10

Deluxe double-CD reissue/remix of heartland classic



It seems weird, in retrospect, to characterise *Scarecrow* as Mellencamp's breakthrough album. The Indiana songwriter was a well-known quantity by 1985: he'd had huge hits under the name Johnny/John Cougar, and *Scarecrow* was his eighth album. But it was his most accomplished to that point: the first, perhaps, on which he'd acquired the confidence to finally be himself. It has held up well. A few decades on, the earnestness of heartland protest songs like "Smalltown" and "Rain On The Scarecrow" sounds more like gravitas, and whether by design or prescience, the album's production is largely unblemished by the flatulent tropes of mid-'80s mainstream rock (REM, upon hearing "Scarecrow", hired producer Don Lehman for *Lifes Rich Pageant*, and recorded it in Mellencamp's studio). The highlight remains the unabashedly joyous departure from the record's essential fretfulness, and a song which Mellencamp considered omitting: "ROCK In The USA", a romping tribute to Mellencamp's '60s-era idols which managed to sound like The Everly Brothers singing Motown. The second CD included with this reissue includes some spirited cover versions, among them The Drifters' "Under The Boardwalk", James Brown's "Cold Sweat", and some redundant but harmless rough mixes and demos.

Extras: 7/10. Second CD, plus booklet of rare photographs, new liner notes by Anthony DeCurtis. **ANDREW MUELLER**

THE METERS

A Message from The Meters: The Complete Josie, Reprise & Warner Bros Singles 1968-1977 (reissue, 2016) **REAL GONE**

8/10

Minimal, instigative R&B and funk on legendary 45s, collected



The music of New Orleans quartet The Meters was all about the careful balance of discipline and play, in both senses of the latter word – there's a core playfulness and generosity to their music; and these four musicians sure could play. *A Message From The Meters* is, maybe, the best way to get a sense of what they did, spanning a decade of great music and countless singles. Many of the group's classics are here, with a strong selection of early material: beautiful, clipped, tensile R&B and proto-funk numbers like "Look-Ka-Py-Py", "Chicken Strut", "Sophisticated Cissy" and "Cissy Strut". But part of the magic of this collection is hearing how The Meters' music, and musicianship, changed over the years – later cuts like "Cabbage Alley" and "Hey Pocky-A-Way" are supple, sensuous performances, clearly influenced by local peers like Professor Longhair and Dr John.

Extras: 6/10. Liner notes by Bill Dahl. **JONDALE**

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| TUE 24 | BRIGHTON DOME |
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| SAT 28 | OXFORD NEW THEATRE |
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| | |
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{THE SPECIALIST}



MEREDITH MONK

The Recordings

ECM NEW SERIES

9/10

New York maverick celebrates 80th birthday with 12CD box



IF Keith Jarrett and Jan Garbarek were the two improvising musicians who established the distinctive tone of the ECM label's contribution to jazz over the past 50 years,

the composers Arvo Pärt and Meredith Monk played an equivalent role for ECM's New Series, the imprint under which the company's founder, Manfred Eicher, gathers those of his artists who come under the loose heading of contemporary classical music.

Monk, born in New York City in 1942, is a singer, composer, director, choreographer and filmmaker who began to develop her extended vocal techniques with solo performances in the early 1960s before founding her own multi-disciplinary company, The House, in 1968. Since garlanded with honours and awards, she belongs with Laurie Anderson and Brian Eno among the ranks of musicians who emerged in the last quarter of the 20th century with music that took its inspiration from John Cage, Terry Riley and others but floated free of defined genres, retaining a trace of its influences in the repetitions, phase-shifts and slowed-down progressions associated with systems music, attracting an audience ready to engage with music that exists beyond established idioms.

A background in performance suffuses her music with a sense of ritual. Her writing for the human voice, whether solo or stacked, mostly uses non-verbal sounds in her search for "shades of feeling or even spaces between feelings, believing

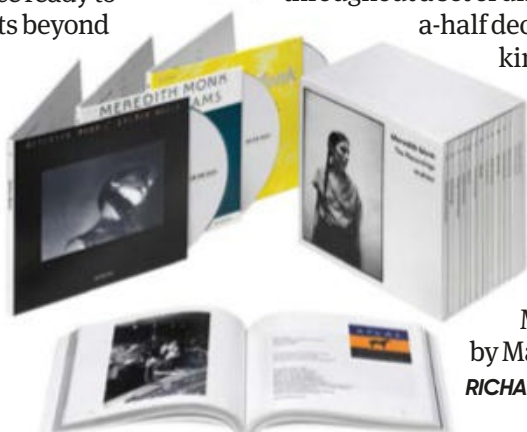
that the voice could delineate the mystery of the indefinable compared to what we label as emotions."

Now, to celebrate her recent 80th birthday, her dozen albums for ECM have been reissued in a boxset of CDs, each individual album retaining its identity as a single disc with its original cover design, from *Dolmen Music* in 1981 to *On Behalf Of Nature* in 2015. The austerity of the set's title is matched by the characteristically restrained elegance of the packaging. The scale of the music ranges from the voice-and-piano duo of *Facing North* and the keyboard duets of *Piano Songs* to the orchestral resources of the opera *ATLAS* (the knottiest, least approachable piece here) and the large choir of *Songs Of Ascension*. In between come many compositions for small groups of voices, keyboards, woodwind and tuned percussion. Collaborators include the pianists Ursula Oppens and Nurit Tilles, the singer Theo Bleckmann and the percussionist John Hollenbeck.

Monk's music reconciles apparent opposites: ancient and modern, simplicity and sophistication. The sounds she conjures seem to reach back to the very origins of music itself while peering into the future. The result, throughout a set of discs spanning three-and-a-half decades of exploration, is a kind of luminous beauty that belongs to her alone.

Extras: 8/10. A 300-page booklet contains detailed recording and personnel information, plus photographs, extracts from scores, essays by Monk herself and a preface by Manfred Eicher.

RICHARD WILLIAMS



YOKO ONO & PLASTIC ONO SUPER BAND

Let's Have A Dream: 1974 One Step Festival Special Edition

SUPERFUJI DISCS

8/10

Electrifying, poetically fierce live set gives notice of a renewed Yoko Ono



The year 1974 rewrote Yoko Ono's creative life. While her husband John Lennon was on his extended 'lost weekend', Ono

was rewiring her connection with her art, recording a (shelved) album, *A Story*, and touring Japan, starting with a headlining appearance at One Step Festival. It's a bravura performance. Ono's voice is rich and flexible, taking fantastic risks with songs – "Don't Worry Kyoko" turns into a barnstorming R&B number, Ono's incantations sparring in with Michael Brecker's sax; "Smashing My Face In A Clear Glass Window" is blunter than ever, even when the musicians get loose and playful. There are also two beautiful performances of the title track, the studio version of which saw release, initially, as a Japan-only single. Given everything Ono had been through, it's a remarkably celebratory homecoming performance, the artist seizing control of her music and directing it with wild abandon.

Extras: None.

JONDALE

ELVIS PRESLEY

Elvis On Tour

SONY LEGACY

8/10

Comprehensive chronicle of the King's 1972 campaign



Showing Elvis Presley in full command, but with decadence gathering fast, this hefty boxset has the fitting whiff of excess.

The material here exists as a priceless by-product of recording done for 1972's *Elvis On Tour* documentary (included on Blu-ray), an account of the 15-city expedition that steamrolled across the United States that spring – the closest thing to a definitive Elvis film released during his lifetime, with a young Martin Scorsese handling split-screen montage. Four of the six CDs capture entire shows, three previously unreleased. Crowds scream like the second coming has arrived in a jumpsuit, understandably, as Elvis and band conjure a fat, soul-fried sound reminiscent of 1969's majestic *From Memphis*, although orchestra and backing singers can overdose on saccharine. Two CDs of intimate rehearsals (mostly unreleased) follow him working up tunes including then-new post-Priscilla lament "Always On My Mind." Baz Luhrmann is reportedly preparing a redux *On Tour* film using unseen footage. For now, for fans, this is a hunka essential.

Extras: None.

DAMIEN LOVE



Deeper into decadence: Elvis in Jacksonville, Florida, 1972

MARTIN REV

To Live/Les Nymphes (reissues, 2003, '08) BUREAU B

8/10, 7/10

More Rev-elations from Suicide man



Martin Rev turned 60 between these two solo albums, both of which speak of an impulsive man who is set in his ways yet still innately curious, a seasoned outsider addicted to the hustle. *To Live* (2003) and *Les Nymphes* (2008) – initially released on CD by niche US label File 13, now properly reissued by Bureau B – are two sides of the same coin: on the former, Rev is incorporating elements of house and techno – rhythms, loops, samples, all scuffed up – into his corroded ghost-blues, but the best moments, like the glittery swirl of “Gutter Rock” or the Roy Orbison twang of “Places I Go”, are when he plays it relatively straight. *Les Nymphes*, recorded after time spent in Montreal, reading up on Greek mythology, is a dreamier affair and his first record composed entirely on a computer. As delicate as “Narcisse” and “Venise” are, a darker techno psych rages deeper into the album. **Extras:** None, but first time on vinyl for both. **PIERS MARTIN**

BOZ SCAGGS

Boz Scaggs (reissue, 1969)

FRIDAY MUSIC

8/10

Boz's not-quite-debut, featuring The Swampers and Duane Allman



By the time he arrived in Alabama to record his first album for Atlantic Records, Boz Scaggs had already been



Boz Scaggs with Jann Wenner at Otis Redding's ranch near Macon, Georgia, May 1969

through the wringer. A 10-year veteran of short-lived blues-rock groups and a sideman in The Steve Miller Band, he'd recorded a solo record for a Swedish label that sold in the negative digits. So there's some noticeable desperation on 1969's *Boz Scaggs*. He sounds like he's trying his damndest to make good on this opportunity, and he has the charisma to make that desperation sound riveting, even exuberant. Backed by The Swampers and Duane Allman – with whom he has a chummy chemistry – Scaggs covers an impressive range of styles: raconteurish blues rock on “I'm Easy”, breezy soul balladry on “I'll Be Long Gone”, even psychedelic country on Jimmie Rodgers' “Waiting For A Train”. *Boz Scaggs* was no blockbuster, but it did gesture toward the immense success he'd enjoy in the '70s.

Extras: None.

STEPHEN DEUSNER

ARCHIE SHEPP

Kwanza (reissue, 1974)

VERVE

8/10

Saxophonist explores jazz styles



Recorded in 1968 and '69 with four completely different lineups, *Kwanza* is a curious oddity that sees Shepp looking

at a fractured late-'60s jazz scene and trying his hand at several different strains of the genre. Three of them are quite hypnotic: “Back Back” is a frenetic piece of James Brown-style big-band funk, “Spoo Bee Doo” is a jazz waltz, featuring yodelling scat vocals from Leon Thomas and a piano vamp from Andy Bey; while “Slow Drag” is a piece of Latin funk featuring pianist Cedar Walton, trumpeter Woody Shaw and drummer Joe Chambers. Two other pieces take us into more experimental territory: the 13-minute “New Africa” is a rumbling piece of New Jazz, written by and starring trombonist Grachan Moncur III; while the 10-minute “Bakai” takes an Afro-Cuban-style tune from John Coltrane's 1957 debut album and turns it into a piece of Art Ensemble Of Chicago-style chaos.

Extras: None.

JOHN LEWIS

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Ghost Riders EFFICIENT SPACE

9/10

Terrific collection of niche garage ballads, 1965–74



Overwhelmingly, garage-pop obscurantism leans on the form's ebullience, rebellion and rowdy

youthfulness; not so this double album, with its singular remit of “North American coming-of-age garage ballads”. Compiled by Swiss graphic designer Ivan Liechti from music sourced by the label from Arkansas to Quebec, its 17 tracks range over acoustic-led laments, slow-mo, folk-edged poeticism and moody psych-pop numbers, many of them reissued here for the first time. Uniformly downbeat and unfussy of production, they're of their time, nodding to Scott Walker, Bobbie Gentry, The Yardbirds, Tim Hardin and The Mamas & The Papas, but are also touchingly marked by their (mostly) unknown creators' youthful artistry. Highlights include Dennis Harte's sweetly anguished “Summer's Over” (backed by members of The Left Banke), the bittersweet organ lilt of “A Puppet” from mid-teens girl gang The Mod 4 and a heavily reverbed, solo take on Dr John's “Twilight Zone”, irresistibly remodelled after Rodriguez by a pre-Ventures Jerry McGee.

Extras: None. **SHARON O'CONNELL**

LOUDON WAINWRIGHT III

Loudon Wainwright III/Album II CHERRY RED

8/10

Evergreen folkie opens his account with laughs and laments



Wainwright's opening brace of albums for Atlantic, now reissued on one CD, announced the wider arrival of an articulate singer-songwriter with an ironically humorous bent, already making a name for himself in East Coast folk clubs. His debut is distinguished



COMING NEXT MONTH...

AS '23's releases keep hotting up, we'll be looking at fine new records from **Robert Forster**, **Lisa O'Neill**, **Sunny War**, **The Waeve**, **Quasi**, **Juni Habel**, **Andy Shauf**, **Mary Elizabeth Remington** and more. In the world of archival releases, **Laraaji** and **Mogwai**'s early years are each chronicled, **The Rolling Stones** are in mono, **Booker T & The MGs** are in the kitchen and **Bob Dylan**'s unveiling his **Fragments**, the *Bootleg Series* chapter covering the sessions for stone-cold classic *Time Out Of Mind*. Catch you then.

EMAIL: TOM.PINNOCK@UNCUT.CO.UK

by vivid reminiscences on the wry coming-of-age ode “School Days” and the gently mocking “Glad To See You've Got Religion”, although he's more blackly comic on the moody “Hospital Song”. Album II is even fuller of wit, most eloquently on the new fatherhood travails of “Be Careful, There's A Baby In The House” (the first of several songs inspired by future famous son Rufus) and the pot smoker affecting thoughts on the naked soul-baring suicide contemplation “I Know I'm Unhappy”.

Extras: 6/10. One bonus track, “Drinking Song”, first mistakenly included on an early pressing of Album II, but subsequently removed.

TERRY STAUNTON

FREE CD

2023 THE ESSENTIAL PREVIEW!

PETER GABRIEL THE CURE BLONDIE

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW:

NEIL YOUNG

ON HARDY, CRAZY HORSE AND... THE FUTURE!

127 REVIEWS

THE STOOGES

MARGO PRICE

THE METERS

JOHN CALE

GONG

NEW ORDER

MIMI PARKER

KATHLEEN

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2023

ALBUMS PREVIEW

One is a three-act rock opera about artists being exiled into space, another is influenced by Uzbekistani disco, while a third features a song called “Layla” inspired by its creator’s apparent “Oedipal hatred of Eric Clapton”.

Join us, then, for *Uncut*’s essential guide to many of 2023’s key albums. Brace yourselves for news of **THE CURE**, **BLONDIE**, **THE ROLLING STONES**, **DEXYS**, **LUCINDA WILLIAMS**, **ELVIS COSTELLO**, **ROBERT FORSTER**, **THE DAMNED**, **NATALIE MERCHANT**, **MARGO CILKER**, **MODERN NATURE**, **GRAHAM NASH**, **SPARKS** and more...

PETER GABRIEL

TITLE: *i/o*

LABEL: Real World

RELEASE DATE: 2023

At last! Two decades in the planning, the rightful heir to 2002's Up

SPEAKING to *Uncut* in 2020, Peter Gabriel suggested that new music may not be too far away. “Although I’ve been writing a lot, I’ve had various other distractions and other projects, so I’m very slow in actually finishing things,” he admitted. “There’s a big backlog of ideas that are unfinished but I’m now getting enough lyrics done, which is often where I slow down. I’m looking forward to getting an album out.”

Gabriel had been dropping hints about his activities for some time, usually via his social media channels. As far back as 2002, not long before the release of *Up*, Gabriel announced that another album of fresh songs – tentatively titled *I/O* – would be released within 18 months. A covers album, various tours, collaborative projects and reissue campaigns have eaten into his schedule since, leaving *I/O* as unfinished business.

In April 2019, he provided an update to BBC 6 Music. Gabriel explained that he’d taken time off owing to his wife being ill, but was excited to be back making music now that she’d fully recovered. Asked what we might expect in terms of new material, he was careful not to give too much away: “There’s a wide bunch [of songs] in there... I’m also trying to do some simple piano versions of things, which I don’t know is enough to make a whole record or not, but that’s something I’m looking at.”

In 2021, Gabriel revealed he’d recently spent 10 days in the studio with his trusted lineup of Tony Levin, Manu Katché and David Rhodes, during which time they had recorded 17 new songs. Fast forward to summer 2022 when Gabriel disclosed that a final recording session was slated for September.

November 2022 saw a major tour announcement, stating that Gabriel will be playing throughout Europe in the spring of 2023, following by a Stateside trek in the late summer and autumn. Named after the new album, now stylised to *i/o*, Gabriel declared: “It’s been a while and I am now surrounded by a whole lot of new songs and am excited to be

taking them out on the road for a spin. Look forward to seeing you out there.”

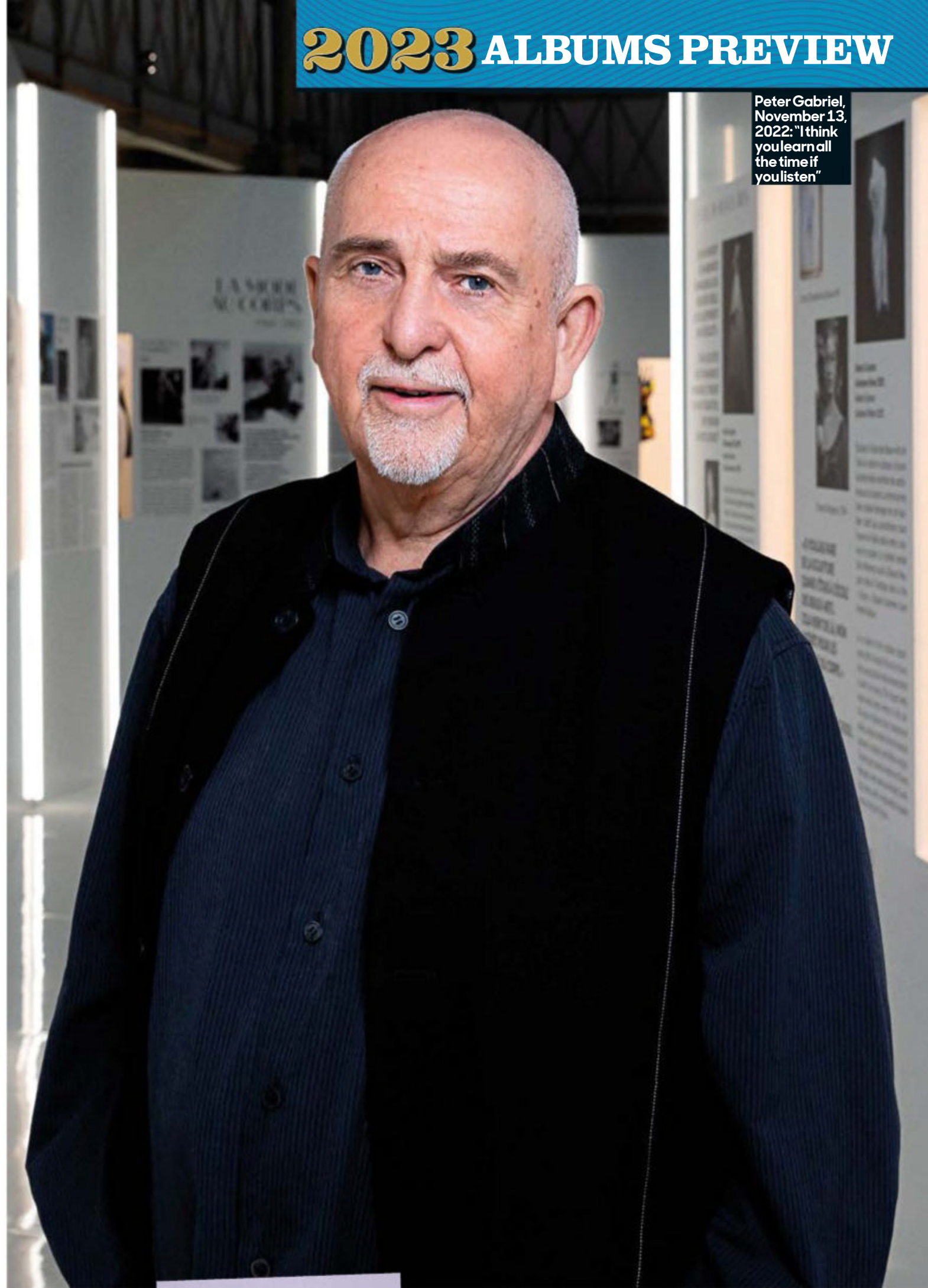
While we await news of *i/o*’s actual content at the time of going to press, various online message boards have been rife with speculation. Gabriel’s most recent studio singles (2016’s “I’m

Amazing” and “The Veil”) may or may not make the final cut, but among the other tracks mooted as potential candidates for inclusion are “Silver Screen”, “Just Add Water”, “Funk Bone”, “Lost And Found”, “Chinese Whisper” and the

much-bootlegged “Baby Man”.

Whatever the final tracklisting, it will be fascinating to trace the evolution of Gabriel’s songwriting on what amounts to his first studio album of originals in 20 years. “I think you learn all the time if you listen, so I hope I’ve matured as a songwriter,” he told *Uncut* in 2020. “The actual art of my songwriting is improving... Sometimes the intersection with popular culture may be over when you’re in your mature years, but there can still be lots of interesting material. I see that all the time with other artists, so I hope to have that in my own work.” ➤

Peter Gabriel, November 13, 2022: “I think you learn all the time if you listen”



PETER GABRIEL
I'M AMAZING





Margo Cilker: "It's a continuation"

MARGO CILKER

TITLE: Unconfirmed
LABEL: Loose
RELEASE DATE: Autumn 2023
Pacific Northwest singer-songwriter builds on 2021's ravishing Pohorylle

MARGO CILKER: We went back into the studio with a very similar cast of characters to the last one. Sera Cahoone was at the helm again and pulled in some fresh players to spice it up. She had a good idea of who she thought would be a good fit. We kind of streamlined everything that we learned during the making of *Pohorylle*. We knew what worked, then we went back in with the same approach, with a fresh batch of songs. There's a couple of new instrumentations, so it's a little different, but not a huge departure. We wanted to keep the momentum going. There's some songs that people will recognise, because they've been in my live set in the last year as I've been touring the UK and throughout the States. So if you've been hearing me play solo, you'll hear these songs with a fleshed-out full band and lush accompaniments. I've been playing "Keep It On A Burner", for example, at every show since I wrote it.

I felt I needed to capture this moment in my career. If anything, I was trying to kind of stay close to where I was when I wrote and recorded my first record. A lot of the songs were written during the

pandemic and during the shutdown, after I'd recorded *Pohorylle* but hadn't even released it. We recorded the record this spring, when it seemed we were all still feeling the pandemic, when we were all still broken and still not touring as much as we needed or wanted to be, I guess. I was getting back on the road, but the industry has been suffering so much. Because I had the songs, we just decided to go for it. The whole thing was done in a week. There's definitely moments where you'll feel this space of a time where I was grounded and couldn't go anywhere. So there's a lot of reminiscing and reflecting on that period, this season of being totally, absolutely, bewilderingly stuck.

Lyricaly, I'm still kind of capturing a little of the place I'm living in, exploring those kinds of things. I don't know what's down the road for me, but this is definitely a second go around. We're looking to release it next fall if everything goes according to plan. I don't know if I want to show my cards too much at this stage, because I don't want people to set up expectations. But I think what's cool about this record is it's a continuation. It's really neat that, even though my life got kind of crazier, we were still able to just get in there and do some more of what we did the first time. I think the result is great.

ELVIS COSTELLO

TITLE: Songs Of Bacharach And Costello

LABEL: Unconfirmed

RELEASE DATE: 2023

Four-album set that revisits a favourite collaborator

ELVIS COSTELLO: It's *Painted From Memory* [1998] and *Taken From Life*, which is a collection of songs that Burt and I wrote over the last 15 years for a proposed *Painted From Memory* musical. So you'll hear other people singing a couple of those original songs, but also a bunch of songs that have never been heard before. We've compiled them with a couple of the songs from *Look Now* [2018] and some recordings that were piano/voice explorations of what the songs would sound like if they were sung by other people. We've put them all together to create an impression of what it would have been like to have that score.

There's another disc of live performances of *Painted From Memory* songs, mostly with Steve Nieve and myself, a couple of them orchestral. Finally, a whole album of Bacharach/David songs, which I thought would be fun to include. This is a love letter to Burt. We went into the studio last September and recorded two songs with Vince Mendoza conducting a 30-piece orchestra. So the bookends for this *Taken From Life* record are newly recorded. The Imposters and I recorded a third song, in Capitol Studios with an orchestra. It was a few years since we'd worked together, but it didn't take very long before I'm in the booth and he was on the call-back saying, "Elvis, you're not singing the right melody." So I had to be on top of it!



Elvis Costello: scoring with Bacharach

BRIGID MAEPOWER

TITLE: Unconfirmed

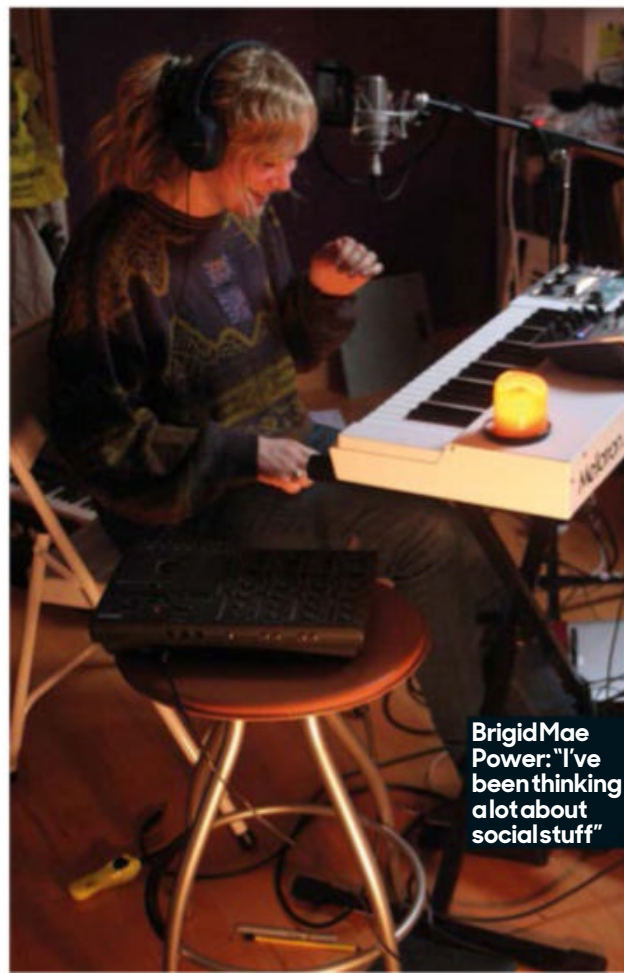
LABEL: Fire

RELEASE DATE: Summer 2023

Anglo-Irish singer-songwriter seeks to redress the balance

BRIGID MAEPOWER: We recorded most of it at the Green Door in Glasgow, an analogue studio, so it's sort of the same recording strategy as *Head Above The Water* [2020], with overdubs at home. There's definitely some harmonica and accordion and stuff like that that I've been gravitating towards. Maybe parts of it are more sort of psychedelic-sounding. Right now it's me and Peter Broderick, and most likely there'll be some pedal steel by Hamilton Belk and trumpet by David Allred. It's probably less of an inward-looking record than I usually make. Lyricaly, I've been thinking a lot about social stuff. Some of the songs are still very personal and others I'm kind of finding the words to express how I

feel about the whole world, while being a little abstract at the same time. I got really sick of all the division caused by the media over the past few years, so I'm just trying to come back to balance and seeing the good in one another. That was a theme for me. There's one song called "Maybe It's Just Lightning". We had some Ukrainian refugees staying with us last year – a mother and a daughter – and it inspired me to write from the perspective of women who are having to hold it together all



Brigid Mae Power: "I've been thinking a lot about social stuff"



Baaba Maal:
on another
musical
adventure



Sparks:
"We want
to sound
progressive
and modern"

over the world in different kinds of circumstances, without much attention being given towards that.

UNKNOWN MORTAL ORCHESTRA

TITLE: Unconfirmed

LABEL: Jagjaguwar

RELEASE DATE: March 2023

Psychedelic Kiwi rockers at the double

RUBAN NIELSON: It's been about five years since the last album and I just felt that after a long time away it made sense to deliver something worth the wait, something more epic than the albums I've made before. It goes in a lot of different places, like a lot of my favourite double albums. It's a very organic, analogue kind of record. Still very scratchy and influenced by the musical golden ages. Very guitar- and piano-heavy. I was influenced a lot by music I heard in Hawaii – a lot of yacht rock, my uncle's reggae, and Hawaiian acoustic music. I was drawing on a lot of old radio rock tunes too. It's not a futuristic, forward-looking record, it's very nostalgic. Memories of music, memories of love and love lost, historical things. Family records. The recording process. One of the songs is called "Meshuggah", after the Swedish metal band, but it's not about them at all. It's about loving someone that transfers some kind of power to you like sugar, almost metabolically. There's another called "Layla", because I have some kind of almost Oedipal hatred of

Eric Clapton and I wondered if I could somehow eclipse his hit song in the algorithm by superseding his song with my own, superior song of the same name. Literally kill the father. Kill God, for those who understand the reference and find it amusing to go that far.

BAABA MAAL

TITLE: Being

LABEL: Marathon

RELEASE DATE: March 2023

Senegalese star mixes desert blues and electro-spirituals

BAABA MAAL: I said to Johan Hugo [producer]: "Let's go for another musical adventure. So we started to talk about investigating the roots of African music again, from Africa to the Caribbean to North America. This album is really a journey. We have some songs that you can dance to, but most of it is kind of meditations. It's just the ancient elements of African music played with ngoni [traditional West African guitar], with my voice and all this electronic sound, different sounds. In most of the songs I'm talking about the importance of the internet, because I think social media is so important for the African continent. People in our communities are facing many challenges and social media is a way of connecting people.

"Yarimayo Celebration" is about my family. I'm from a fisherman family, and every year we organise this celebration near the river, singing, with decorated boats. It's so powerful, that positive energy of people coming together. I have many young people on the album with me, like Mamadou Sarr, who plays most of the percussion. I discovered Rougi, who has a beautiful voice, on social media. She's on "Boboyillo" and she's a great singer. I also have Esau

Mwamwaya from Malawi, and General Paco Lenol is one of the great rappers and hip-hop artists here in Senegal. He raps in Fulani because he wants people to understand it much better.

SPARKS

TITLE: Unconfirmed

LABEL: BMG

RELEASE DATE: May 2023

Stand by for the "provocative and unconventional"

RUSSELL MAEL: This will be our 27th album, and we don't want to sound like a band that's been around for as long as that. From our perspective, we want to sound progressive and modern, and we think we've managed to do that. We always fight desperately hard to move on and try things that we don't know will work or not, just to be as bold as we can be. Pop music's function, from our perspective, is to be brash and shake things up. There's no real theme, other than there's a Sparks sensibility to the lyrics that's been there from day one. We can be reflective about our lives, but we don't want to do it in a soft sort of way, where things aren't as biting as they once were. So it won't disappoint those expecting us to have titles and subject matter that are provocative and unconventional for pop music. It's Ron and I on the album, with just our band, the guys that we've had with us on the recent tours. They're all really dedicated to

the Sparks cause. We've also got *X Crucior* coming up. It's a really kind of high-concept movie musical, which, again, could only really come from Sparks world. It's liberating for us to be following two creative paths that are both kind of different sensibilities in a certain way. Never mind this pop music stuff, we're movie moguls now!

ROSE CITY BAND

TITLE: Garden Party

LABEL: Thrill Jockey

RELEASE DATE: April 2023

Green-fingered guitar goodness from Portland's Ripley Johnson

RIPLEY JOHNSON: I was trying to make something very optimistic. I just went back to *Summerlong* [2020], which was a very positive record, because on *Earth Trip* [2021] I was wrangling with all these other darker sorts of things. The older I get – and just as this world spins into greater and greater chaos – I rely more and more on music to keep me grounded, to inspire me and to bring joy into my life. So I really wanted to make something that I could offer to people in that vein. In Portland people have lots of interesting gardens, so I do a lot of walking around the neighbourhood, getting a lot of joy from the nature around me. So that naturally tied into the *Garden Party* theme as well. I wrote a lot of it just walking, actually. We went back to work with John McEntire for the mix, Barry Walker is on pedal steel and Paul Hasenberg plays keyboards. John Jeffrey is on there too, who's played drums on all of the Rose City records, and my partner Sanae [Yamada] plays synthesiser on a couple of tracks. There are songs like "Chasing Rainbows", "Slow Burn", "Mariposa" and "Porch Boogie". We spend a lot of time sitting on the porch, especially in the spring and summer. I sit out there playing my guitar and watching people go by, just enjoying the moment. ➤

MATTHEW DONALDSON; TODD WALBERG



Unknown Mortal Orchestra:
organic



Rose City Band:
deriving a lot of
joy from nature



Robert Smith: giving Madrid a foretaste of doom, November 11, 2022

THE CURE

TITLE: *Songs Of A Lost World*
LABEL: Unconfirmed
RELEASE DATE: 2023
First in 15 years promises emotional release

THE Cure began work on a belated successor to *4:13 Dream* in February 2019 at Rockfield Studios in Monmouthshire, where they recorded no less than 19 songs. Interrupted by a three-month run of festival headline shows that summer, they made it back to Rockfield in September, cutting another seven songs. Then the Covid pandemic stopped their momentum.

By this March, however, Robert Smith was talking up two new Cure albums, telling *NME* that one would be called *Songs Of A Lost World*. “The first Cure album is relentless doom and gloom,” he said. “It’s the doomiest thing we’ve ever done. The second one is upbeat...” Later in the spring, Smith expanded to *NME*: “It’ll be worth the wait... A lot of the songs are difficult to sing, and that’s why it’s taken me a while.”

Smith explained that he was hopeful of an autumn release to coincide with The Cure’s dates around Europe and the UK. While the tour got underway without any sign of the album, the band previewed two new tracks on opening night in Riga. “Alone” started their set in expansive style, with Smith’s lyrics living up to the promised themes of portent and uncertainty: “*This is the end of every song that we sing*”. Later that

night, the melancholy “Endsong” made its debut, with Smith intoning about life with “*No hopes, no dreams, no love*”.

Four nights later, in Stockholm, The Cure unveiled a third new offering, “And Nothing Is Forever”. A six-minute piece about devotion and tragedy, largely driven by synth and piano, it appears to echo the sentiments of its recent companions: “*Is the memory of the first time/In the stillness of a teardrop/I’ll hold you for the last time/In the dying of the life*”.

By the time the tour had moved on to Kraków on October 20, the band were premiering the similarly moving “I Can Never Say Goodbye”. Over guitar and piano, Smith sang of dark days, informed by the loss of his brother Richard, who passed away a few years ago: “*Something wicked this way comes/To steal away my brother’s life*”. “My brother used to live here for a long, long time,” Smith told the audience. “This song’s about him.”

A fifth new track, “A Fragile Thing”, was previewed in Italy come early November. Here, Smith seems to be consoling himself with the notion of music as both solace and salvation: “*Nothing you can do to turn it back, she said/Nothing you can do but sing/This song is a fragile thing/This song is my everything*”. Finally due for release sometime in 2023, the signs are that *Songs Of A Lost World* will be an intensely emotional experience.

DEXYS

TITLE: *The Feminine Divine*
LABEL: Unconfirmed
RELEASE DATE: Summer 2023

First all-new opus in a decade from a reinvigorated Dexys

KEVIN ROWLAND: In 2016 we released *Dexys Do Irish And Country Soul*, and at the end of that period I was just fed up with the music business. I was worn out and needed to get away. So I just worked on myself a bit, trying to improve myself. That changed my outlook. Then a couple of years ago I started to feel more inspired again. I just felt like I’d got something to say, I’d got a point to make. Lyrically, it’s not autobiographical, but it is personal. Some of it is me, for sure. The album’s got a narrative, it’s a journey. It starts in one place – the opening song is about a guy who’s got one attitude towards life and women – and ends in a completely different place. It talks about masculinity and femininity. The first two or three songs are sort of one style, which would not be unrecognisable to people who know Dexys. But then it starts to move, sound-wise. Three songs I co-wrote with [trombonist] Jim Paterson, [multi-instrumentalist] Sean Read co-wrote a couple and Mike Timothy [keyboards] co-wrote three. That’s the other thing that’s been good about making this album. There’s more band involvement. It feels very much a real team effort. This is more than Kevin Rowland calling himself Dexys and getting some players in. I’m really feeling positive about it all.



Kevin Rowland: has a point to make

PHILIP SELWAY

TITLE: *Strange Dance*
LABEL: Bella Union
RELEASE DATE: February 2023
Radiohead man and guests go “broad and tall” on third solo outing

PHILIP SELWAY: I’d recently done soundtracks for *Let Me Go* and *Carmilla*, then a piece for the Rambert Dance Company and a BBC Radio 3 play. The experiences of doing that, and the musicians that I’d worked with, informed the kind of textures that I wanted to bring to this record. It’s that kind of blend between acoustic and electronic. Working with people like Quinta, Laura Moody, Hannah Peel and Adrian Utley, there’s something quite experimental about what they do. Originally, I envisaged it as this kind of fantasy album that Carole



Phil Selway: off the drum stool and into “the ups and downs of life”

King and Daphne Oram might make, and then they'd invited me to drum on it. But I was just a day into drumming and realised it wasn't working. So I sacked myself and Valentina Magaletti came in and did the drums instead. She was amazing, she brought this whole other life into it. Immediately, you see all the possibilities around that. I wanted this soundscape that was kind of broad and tall, something you could lose yourself in, but then finding a way for that to wrap around quite an intimate vocal. In simple terms, I guess, *Strange Dance* refers to the ups and downs of life, trying to consolidate or reconcile all these different elements of your life, all these contradictions. The randomness of it. But at the heart of it, there's a real beauty in finding your way through it all.

JULIEBYRNE

TITLE: *Unconfirmed*

LABEL: *Unconfirmed*

RELEASEDATE: *Summer 2023*

First in six years from folk-rooted New Yorker

JULIE BYRNE: This record was made from three core textures: fingerstyle guitar, piano – a newly adopted instrument for me, taken up in the pandemic – and Eric Littmann's iconic synth playing: the minilogue, the MS20, the Prophet. We get wider than ever before. There's also Alex Somers and Jake Falby, who created the orchestra. Marilu Donovan of LEYA graces the tracks with harp. Nadia Hulett built the choirs. Emily Fontana was my collaborator in words. Jefre Cantu Ledesma is on modular synth. Lyrically, it deals with devotion, grief, entropy, endurance and learning, at times the hard way, who you can count on. The love of chosen family. Romance in friendship. Pandemic. Alliance. Renewal and emerging, as my

collaborator Emily Fontana would say, "gorgeous and wild". The earliest recording sessions were held in Eric Littmann's home studio in the winter of 2020 in Chicago. Eric and I then travelled to New York to record with Marilu, then to Los Angeles in the early summer of 2021, where Jake Falby composed and recorded a whole orchestra's worth of string arrangements. Eric died on June 19, 2021. In the cataclysm of his death, we didn't start again until January 2022. In the winter of that new year, in the fires of indescribable grief, Jake Falby, Alex Somers, Marilu Donovan, Emily Fontana, Nadia Hulett and I convened in the Catskills at Spillway Sounds to finish the record in tribute to Eric.

ALTINGÜN

TITLE: *Ask*

LABEL: *Glitterbeat*

RELEASEDATE: *March 2023*

Turkish psych mavens get inspired by the big stuff – and Uzbekistani disco

JASPER VERHULST: For this album we wanted to work together as a live band throughout the whole process. We only did a couple of overdubs, so it was a really old-school approach to recording. We recorded at Schenk Studios in Amsterdam, with lots of vintage gear and located beautifully by the water. I think everyone in this band is always listening to a pretty eclectic mix of musical genres. The last song of the album, "Doktor Civanım", was inspired by a disco song from Uzbekistan that I was really into at that time.

MERVE DAŞDEMİR: These classics are again about main themes: love, loss, life. I had the title in my mind forever, but I was kind of waiting for the right album to call



it Ask. There's no literal translation for this word, but I can say it's a much more intensified version of 'love'. That's what making music feels like for us. "Badi Sabah Olmadan" is about adoration and longing for the loved one. "Dere Geliyor" also has the same love and longing theme. "Kalk Gidelim" means 'Get up, let's go!'. That song has a more fun, naughty lyrical theme to it. It goes: "Get up let's go/Light up your cigarette and flashlight and let's go/Let's mix raki and wine and let's go/Boy your name is Ismail, oh boy your name is Ismail".

SMASHINGPUMPKINS

TITLE: *Atum*

Label: *Martha's Music/Thirty Tigers*

RELEASEDATE: *April 2023*

Ambitious three-act rock opera, released in stages

BILLY CORGAN: *Mellon Collie...* and *Machina* had both been conceptual albums, so I was like, 'OK, is there a certain chapter to explore further here?' With *Atum*, the story takes place 20 years from the present, so the main character in

the narrative is 20 years older than myself. Artists are being exiled into space as a way to ameliorate the tension between free speech and government censorship. It's a way to explore things that maybe I'd be uncomfortable exploring on my own, and by using different characters I feel greater freedom. At some point you grow past your own opinion to explore a wider world of myth and mystery.

I kind of fell back in love with playing the guitar while making this record. It seemed to go with the themes that I was after and felt very organic. Act One is kind of a more tepid musical statement, but like a movie, you've got to line things up to get to dramatic points. So Act Two and Act Three are way more dramatic. One of the things I'm most proud of is that there's not a ton of repetition. Somehow, in Acts Two and Three, we were able to find new musical settings. If you think of the width of *Mellon Collie...*, it grows more into that sort of territory. So if one side is orchestral and grand, the other side is in your face and rocking.

KIM CERRONE: PAUL LLEDGE





Jack Cooper:
"The record
has an arc and
a narrative"

MODERN NATURE

TITLE: Unconfirmed
LABEL: Bella Union
RELEASE DATE: 2023
Jack Cooper's amorphous outfit ready abstract successor to Island Of Noise. Unlikely to feature Steve Winwood

JACK COOPER: We had a baby at the start of the year, so I knew I wouldn't be able to work in the same way I had previously. I spent most of last year working on these songs and developing the direction of it all. The last few records I've made have had very meticulously laid-out narratives and frameworks and this is no exception, but like the music itself, the themes are far more abstract and hard to define. Since I've been writing songs, I've found myself frustrated by the transition of music being in my head to it being played on a guitar, sang and eventually recorded. I think that's a common thing. Ideas are often more interesting in my head. When you work out the chords to an idea and then figure out a tempo or rhythm, it immediately starts conforming, so in regards to time and tonality, this record is more abstract.

I've taught myself to read and write music over the last few years and have worked on some ideas and systems for composing instrumental music that has been really valuable when writing this album. It's opened up a whole world really. I've spent most of the year listening to a John Cage

boxset that came out on Another Timbre. That's been really absorbing, and then I got hooked on the Heat Warps website that listed every live recording of the Miles Davis electric bands.

The record has an arc and a narrative, but it's more difficult for me to pin down a theme. I feel like I've been making Modern Nature records long enough to have established a palette of themes and ideas, but I'm less interested in that being acute. *Island Of Noise* was quite upfront, lyrically, and this is not. I can't give you any song titles at the moment, they're all just working titles. Every Modern Nature song so far has had a one-word title, so all I can say is that they will be one-word titles.

We always work out of the same place, which is an all-analogue studio in East London called Gizzard. Ed Deegan, who co-produces these records, is really quite integral to them. We record the bones of the music live, then add strings, woodwinds and vocals. The core of the recording is myself, Jim Wallis and Jeff Tobias, but I've brought in some people who I've worked with on an orchestral record I made earlier this year that's out next year on Astral Spirits – members of Apartment House and then some other people I've met around the Cambridge music scene, like Dominic Lash and Alex Ward. I've been trying to get to Steve Winwood, but it's not happening!

Lucinda Williams:
expect "probably
a little more rock"



LUCINDA WILLIAMS

TITLE: Unconfirmed
LABEL: Highway 20/
Thirty Tigers
RELEASE DATE: May 2023
The first of two projected new releases, with a starry cast

LUCINDA WILLIAMS: It was a different kind of process this time, because I didn't write all the songs completely by myself. I started working with Jesse Malin first, who I'd helped with some songs on his last-but-one album, and there's quite a bit of co-writing with Tom [*Overby*], my husband/manager. There's probably a little more rock on this one. "Where The Songs Can Find Me" is basically about being open and ready, because a lot of times as a songwriter you feel like you're just a vehicle for the song. Another one, "Hum's Liquor", is named after a store in Minneapolis, where Tom use to live. He'd look out from his apartment window every morning and see Bob Stinson of The Replacements walking into the liquor store as soon as they opened. Tommy Stinson, Bob's brother, contributed some vocals to that song in the studio. So it's kind of a homage, and Tommy was really moved to be able to participate. Margo Price did some background vocals on another track,

Angel Olsen came in too. But the really big one is Bruce Springsteen and his wife Patti [*Scialfa*]. They sang on two songs, so we've got a handful of cool, interesting people. We've actually got a bunch of new songs, so the plan right now is to have two separate records out next year, but split a few months apart.

THE DAMNED

TITLE: Unconfirmed
LABEL: earMusic
RELEASE DATE: March 2023
Punk veterans get "lively", with a few surprise turns

DAVE VANIAN: With The Damned, it's a case of expect the unexpected. Although there's usually direct links with previous material, it always sounds different. I really like that about what we do. This album has a harder edge to it, it's a lot more guitar-based. But it does also have a few surprises in there. I don't want to give too much away, but there's one track in particular that has no resemblance to anything else on there. It's an orchestrated piece rather than a straight ahead three-minute blast. The influences in this band differ from individual to individual, and you can't expect The Damned to settle down. We probably should've done, but we've done the opposite in



The Damned:
a "very
current"
sound

fact. It's not something ploddy by a load of old farts. People will either love it or hate it, that's up to them to decide. But there's no compromise. If you liked *Evil Spirits* [2018], this one will be much livelier. A guy called Mitch – Thomas Mitchener – produced it in a studio up in Bushey. We got involved with him because I had him work on the Palladium [live] album. I could tell he knew what we wanted and what we were doing, so I thought it was important to work with him on this one. I wanted a sound that was still recognisably us, but very current. A lot of this album is more of a celebration of life.

GRAHAM NASH

TITLE: Now
LABEL: Unconfirmed
RELEASE DATE: Spring 2023
Evergreen 80-year-old's "intimate" successor to 2016's This Path Tonight

GRAHAM NASH: I think this is my most personal album, it's very intimate. I've always worn my heart on my sleeve. It's all new stuff, produced by Todd Caldwell, my piano player. Shane Fontayne is all over the album too. A lot of it was done remotely. I'd put a rough acoustic guitar and rough vocal down on two tracks, send the files to Shane in Los Angeles, who'd put on guitars and his voice, then I'd send it all to Todd and he would pass it on to his brother Toby, who's a drummer. That was an interesting way to work and I think we pulled it off. It sounds completely studio-made. "Golden Idols" is about the Republicans who are perpetuating the big lie, and there's "Stars And Stripes", about the American flag and what it really means today. But then there are songs like "Follow Your Heart", "Love Of Mine" and "When It Comes To You", which are written about my wife, Amy. There are maybe five



Graham Nash: all new stuff

songs on the album about her, because she changed my life for the better. I've also been helping Allan Clarke, who I started The Hollies with in December 1962, on his solo record. I wrote a song about The Hollies' love for Buddy Holly, called "Buddy's Back". There'll be versions on both of our albums. In my head, I can sure hear that one on the radio.

NATALIE MERCHANT

TITLE: Keep Your Courage
LABEL: Nonesuch
RELEASE DATE: April 2023
First collection in almost a decade avoids easy definition

NATALIE MERCHANT: I hadn't really written a song in maybe five years, but I decided I had things I wanted to say, musically. So I sat down at the piano and started writing. I've been experimenting with different styles of music for some time now. My guitar player calls it orchestral folk, but it kind of defies standard definition. There are some Celtic sounds on there and a soul tinge to some of it. There's even one song, "Tower Of Babel", that has baritone sax, trumpet and trombone. It sounds almost like New Orleans. Lyrically, there's a lot of talk about love in many different forms and many different attitudes towards love. "Big Girls" is about



Natalie Merchant: Celtic sounds and a soul tinge

sisterhood and supporting each other, recognising that we all share the same kind of pain at some point in our lives. I really wanted Abena [Koomson-Davis] to sing with me, so I specifically wrote "Big Girls" and "Come On Aphrodite" with her in mind. I wrote "Sister Tilly" after Sally Grossman died during the pandemic. I'd known her for years and she was always an inspiration – a really strong woman... It also made me think about the fact that so many women of that generation are passing now. I even mention Joan Didion in the lyrics, who died while we were making the record. So it became this tribute to these women that we owe so much to.

ROBERT FORSTER

TITLE: The Candle And The Flame
LABEL: Tapete
RELEASE DATE: February 2023
Deeply emotional return for former Go-Between

IN what he called a "difficult and lengthy" website post, Forster recently revealed that Karin Bäuml, his wife and musical companion, had been diagnosed with ovarian cancer in 2021. "In these dark days," he wrote, "we

turned to music once again. I had a batch of new songs I'd written over the last years, and we started playing them together. Our son Louis often dropped in and soon began joining us on guitar." Onetime Go-Betweens bassist Adele Pickvance was invited in too.

On September 27, 2021, just prior to Bäuml's surgery, Forster booked Alchemix Studios in Brisbane: "The four of us sitting in a circle, recorded 10 songs live in seven hours. Over the next months, when Karin was strong enough and Covid numbers were low, we booked odd days in the studio. Sometimes our daughter, Loretta, would join us and we brought in friends to help, too. In early March, with her chemotherapy course just finished, we did our last day in the studio. The songs we recorded formed an album... We wanted you to know the story of the creation of the record first. Why it exists. Why these musicians are playing on it. Why there isn't layers of production, instead a live, catch-a-moment feel to the sound... It may seem strange making an album in these circumstances and looking back, we really don't know how we did it, but we do know that it helped us just so much as a family." ➤

JACOB LICKENSTAFF



Robert Forster: catching moments with his family



2023 ALBUMS PREVIEW

FATOUMATA DIAWARA

TITLE: Unconfirmed

LABEL: 3ème Bureau

RELEASE DATE: Spring 2023

Special guests, positivity and "lots of melodies" from Malian ace

FATOUMATA DIAWARA: I'm trying to put all my energies, all my love and spirit, good vibrations, happiness and good feelings into this album. It's representing who I am today. I was composing when I was coming back home from touring, going to the studio with new ideas, changing things, adding something. Feeling with melody. When I was done, I called my brothers to see what we could do, what we could achieve together. You get a first taste with new song "Nsera" [featuring Damon Albarn]. It's a song about hope and positivity. Damon knows Bamako better than me. He is really a child of Africa, he's our brother. He's a very sensitive person like me. We



Fatoumata Diawara: positive vibrations

recognise each other, we know each other, it's very instinctive. It's like putting Gorillaz and Fatoumata Diawara together, and both of us like a lot of melodies. "Tulun" is about having fun, not getting down. You have to always keep on being brave, keep the positive vibrations. "Mussja" is about strength, how to encourage my sisters to keep working, because by working you can have results that really surprise you. I sing about female genital mutilation. I'm inviting my brothers and sisters to stop mutilating their daughters, and that subject is very important to me, so I have to keep singing about it. I myself have been mutilated, so I think I'm the best person to talk about it.

THE ROLLING STONES

TITLE: Unconfirmed

LABEL: Universal

RELEASE DATE: Summer 2023

Waiting on our friends... It's got to happen next year, right?

THE Stones have been teasing new music for some time now. In March this year, Keith Richards told *The Daily Star* that he'd been "playing a lot of bass" on forthcoming Stones music, his style bringing "another angle" to their sound: "It's quite interesting – at the same time it's Stones, man." Pressed on how many tracks had emerged from recent sessions with Mick Jagger in Jamaica, Richards disclosed: "More than I can count, it was a very productive week." He

added that he and Jagger "got a very good sound going... Jamaica is good for sound."

Ahead of what promises to be the Stones' first album of original songs since 2005's *A Bigger Bang*, Ronnie Wood gave two interviews this October that also addressed the issue of the late Charlie Watts' contributions to the material. "We are recording the new album now and we're going to LA in a few weeks to carry it on and finish it off," he told *The Sun*, while alluding to a summer release date. "Charlie is on some of the tracks and drummer Steve Jordan."

Wood elaborated further to GB News' Alastair Stewart: "We're working now to finish up the studio album that we've been working on for years. So we're bringing that ahead. And things are going really well... Hopefully, we'll have a new package to bring out, the best one in the last 15 years, I reckon."

THE WAEVE

TITLE: The WAEVE

Label: Transgressive

RELEASE DATE: February 2023

Anything goes for Graham Coxon and Rose Elinor Dougall

ROSE ELINOR DOUGALL: Graham and I met at a charity event at the Jazz Café in December 2020, then we ended up chatting on email and met up in January. We had this very loose idea that we might get together to do a tiny bit of writing, but within three



The WAEVE: miraculous unravellings

weeks we had all this stuff that just kind of miraculously materialised. It had its own identity already. We just let the songs sort of unravel. It was a bit like a game of Exquisite Corpse, where somebody adds an extra thing. Each time I'd write a lyric, Graham would have a melody or there'd be a shift in tempo and suddenly there'd be these huge pieces of music that we kind of chipped away at.

GRAHAM COXON: The song that seemed to suggest a way forward for us was "Can I Call You", which opened up a sonic landscape with quite a troublesome chord progression. Rose wrote this beautiful melody line over it and then there were introductions of other sorts of sounds, like saxophones. So we played around with those ideas. I think we have a real wide appreciation of all kinds of different music – jazz and classical, pop, rock, prog. Everything can be utilised, it can just slot in somewhere. There was no drought of ideas. I'm really proud of what we achieved, and this band is definitely an ongoing concern.

BLONDIE

TITLE: Unconfirmed

LABEL: Unconfirmed

RELEASE DATE: 2023

Their 12th: an in-house affair, with one exception

IT'S been a busy year for Blondie. Aside from curating and releasing the Grammy-nominated boxset *Against The Odds 1974–1982*, they undertook an extensive tour across the UK and America. They've also been back in the studio, preparing a successor to 2017's *Pollinator*. The news was broken in February, when Chris Stein announced that "we've started working up new material over the last few days".

Drummer Clem Burke tells *Uncut*: "We are making a record now, so we are all together in New York. It's the same story as ever. We have a great selection of songs and demos, and then everybody contributes their style as we look at how to interpret the song.

"*Pollinator* was done with us all together in the studio, and we're looking to do the same again as we really liked the results. We want to be in the studio putting those basic tracks together, because there is a natural chemistry between us and it's a shame when that gets diluted by different recording processes. I hope we have it out in spring."

In September, the band revealed that Glen Matlock is to appear on the album. The ex-Pistol had filled in for bassist Leigh Foxx on the *Against The Odds* tour, after Foxx had suffered a back injury. "Glen has been great," Stein explained to *Classic Pop*. "Unlike *Pollinator*, we're mostly keeping this album in-house. It's just the band and Glen playing on it, he's fitted right in."

While the rest of the details are still a little sketchy, Debbie Harry did suggest (as far back as 2021) that



Blondie: "We have great melodies"

the producer of Blondie's next album would once again be John Congleton, who oversaw *Pollinator*. "We have lot more songs from within the band than *Pollinator*," says Burke. "We have great melodies, and we have some

strange cover songs, including one by a very underground New York band from the 1960s. We might do another song by Johnny Marr. He gave us one for the last album and we had a great time trying with Johnny." ☺



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Or contact the Academic Programme Manager, Mariam Ismail (m.ismail@gresham.ac.uk)

The closing date is 9:30 am **9 January 2023**. Interviews will be held in London on **22 February 2023**.

Back from the wilds of Topanga Canyon with a “psychedelic” new album fired by weed and tequila, **MARGO PRICE** is moving far beyond her country-tonk roots. But will inner flight, personal loss and newfound wisdom tame her wayward impulses? “It’s been a long, weird road to get to the person that I am,” she tells Stephen Deusner. “But here I am.” **Photo by** ALYSSE GAFKJEN

Altered States

“WHEN I sing this song, I get really emotional,” Margo Price says, standing

on the makeshift stage in her band’s rehearsal space. It’s a drab, windowless warehouse, with a few couches tucked away in the corners and tables full of snacks and lukewarm Chinese takeout. Today, she and her backing musicians have been working on the transition from “Change Of Heart”, a country-rock barnstormer with a heavy riff, into “County Road”, a piano-led ghost story that recalls late-’70s Springsteen and serves as the tender heart of her fourth solo album, *Strays*.

It’s a tricky tonal shift between defiance and remembrance, between kiss-off and eulogy, yet that contrast only makes “County Road” sound more haunted. Dressed in a black T-shirt with Bob Dylan’s silhouette on the front, a fannypack around her waist, Price slams a tambourine against her hip as she leads the band. It’s only a rehearsal, but she doesn’t hold back, belting the

tune and conveying a bone-deep heartache when she sings, “*Hey kid, you know it’s been three years since the change/The band broke up, the boys don’t talk, and this city’s rearranged*”. It looks for a moment like she really is trying to maintain her composure behind the microphone.

Beside her on stage stands her husband, Jeremy Ivey, strumming an acoustic guitar and looking on sympathetically. The couple wrote “County Road” about a friend of theirs named Ben Eyestone, a drummer for a band called The Lonely H and a member of her ever-evolving circle of friends, musicians, peers, mentors, mentees, heroes and hopefuls. After moving to Nashville from Washington State, Eyestone gigged around town, played with Price and other local singer-songwriters, until he developed colon cancer and died. Like many musicians, he didn’t have health insurance.

“The song,” according to Price, “is about those five to 10 years when we were all struggling and hanging out at The 5 Spot. It’s about how everything has changed since then, which I guess makes it my ‘Boys Of Summer’. I love playing the song. It’s gotten a good response from fans so ➤



Desert trip:
Margo Price
in April 2022



Twice the Price: backstage during CMT's *Coal Miner's Daughter: A Celebration of The Life & Music Of Loretta Lynn* at the Grand Ole Opry, Nashville, October 30, 2022

far, but it still hurts just thinking about it. I have to disassociate from it so I don't start crying."

Price's band remain on stage checking levels and discussing parts and noodling, as she retrieves her large iced coffee and finds a couch in a quiet corner of the room. She's only in town for a few days between gigs at opposite ends of the country; tomorrow she'll head to North Carolina to play benefits for Healing Appalachia in West Virginia and FarmAid in North Carolina. With kids in school this afternoon, she's spending her downtime running through songs from *Strays* and ironing out kinks in the set.

Lately, however, Price doesn't mind all this hubbub. She has become used to dividing her time between making appearances for her new memoir, *Maybe We'll Make It*, uploading new episodes of her new podcast, *Runaway Horses*, and being a mother to her two kids. Not too long



Ben Eyestone, 2008



Mike Campbell, 2022

ago, she worried that her career was winding down rather than building up. "I got to the point with my music where I felt purposeless. I wasn't on the road playing for fans. I felt like my career was over. I felt like it had just gotten started, but I was already having these fears about ageing and not knowing where I fit in. I'm ready to get back to work."

Those worries fed the songs on *Strays*, which jettisons the rough-and-tumble country of previous albums for a harder, more psychedelic sound. It's her weirdest and wildest record yet, but also her wisest. As "County Road" suggests, there's a lot of pain and worry on the album, and Price is interested in the ways

we confront and manage those dark feelings. On some songs it's hard drugs and harder living; on others, gentler psychedelics.

"We're all trying to self-medicate and numb away the hurt of living. It's the rock'n'roll thing to do, but it's not sustainable." Even Price had to give up some of her own vices along the way.

Mike Campbell, best known as the guitarist for Tom Petty & The

Heartbreakers and The Dirty Knobs, co-wrote songs with Price and Ivey and played on *Strays*. He saw that conflict up close.

"She's a deep soul," he explains. "She's drawing from a lot of different sources, older country and older rock'n'roll, and blending them together in a way that makes her really stand out. She truly connects with people on a musical level. She's got that vibe, that purity of spirit."

"I DON'T want people saying this is my sobriety record, because it's not," Price insists, taking another sip of her iced coffee. "It's psychedelic. It's forged in fire and steeped in various substances. This album is MDMA and ayahuasca. It's definitely psilocybin mushrooms. I quit drinking, but I kept doing everything else."

Strays was born of a series of trips, some fun and others decidedly not, and the music reflects that narcotic buzz with heavy riffs and kaleidoscopic arrangements. It's about as far from the honky-tonk country of her previous records as she could get: music to take drugs to make music to take drugs to.

The journey started in the summer of 2020, when Price and Ivey – following several hard months of lockdown during which his long illness left her to parent a newborn alone – rented a house on the beach in South Carolina. "We were itching to get away and have some personal time," says Ivey. "We felt like kids again. We got a lot of booze and took a bag of mushrooms. The first night we just partied and talked about the record we wanted to write. We

"This album is forged in fire"
MARGO PRICE

had a really intense conversation and listened to a lot of records.”

Remarkably, he still remembers the playlist: Dylan’s *Time Out Of Mind* followed by Patti Smith’s *Horses* and Joni Mitchell’s *Hejira* and finishing with *Hypnotic Eye*, the final record by Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers. It was an intense first night, as they sat there tripping, listening, writing and sweating in the summer heat. “It was July and it was so hot. I remember Margo was talking to me and the whole time I was peeling my clothes off. I’m in the furnace! I’m having ideas, but I’m in the furnace.”

Price shakes her head at the memory. “We were partying pretty hard,” she admits. “We had a Hunter S Thompson weekend.” It was, they both clarify, a very productive trip. They arrived home with several new songs in tow, including Strays opener “Been To The Mountain” and closer “Landfill”. The latter was written on the beach, where they nursed hangovers and tried to shield themselves against the high winds whipping sand in their faces. “There was no way to get away from the sand in your eyes,” Ivey recalls. “It was pretty horrible, but it was a beautiful moment, too. We ended up writing about it, and Margo came up with that amazing line, ‘I put myself in my own painting’, which seemed crucial to the whole album.”

The couple have always been close collaborators, writing songs together and playing on each other’s records. Price even produced Ivey’s first two solo albums, 2019’s *The Dreamer And The Dream* and 2020’s *Waiting Out The Storm*. “Jeremy and I really can speak telepathically. He’s so good at writing things from my point of view. I’m really grateful I get to collaborate with him. He’s my secret weapon.” He is also, she admits, much more disciplined in his songwriting, more regimented in his schedule than she is. “He gets up in the morning, sits at the kitchen table with his guitar and writes a song a day. It’s very inspiring, actually.”

Her own process, especially for *Strays*, is much more open-ended. Aside from a few songwriting retreats, she did most of her writing while traipsing around their acreage outside of Nashville and taking frequent hikes through the Tennessee countryside. “That’s when I get good ideas for songs. I just listen to the wind in the trees. You start walking, you get into the rhythm and you get ideas. It’s good meditation, because you don’t know you’re meditating.”

Hiking became not just a way to write songs, but also to connect with other artists, to assuage the loneliness of lockdown. “During Covid, I went out to Emmylou Harris’s dog farm, which is out in the country near where I live. We both got walking sticks and went out with her dogs.” No songs came out of their ramble, but Price realised that “I need people like Emmylou and Jeremy. I need that community of artists around me.”

“Everyone gravitates toward Margo,” says Sharon Van Etten, who co-wrote and sings harmonies on the song

“IT WAS LIKE JACK KEROUAC”

Margo Price on her new memoir

PART rock bio, part country-music picaresque, and part exploration of grief and motherhood, Price’s first book, *Maybe We’ll Make It*, chronicles her life leading up to her mid-2010s, as she left the family farm to find her fortune in Nashville, met her

husband, lost a child, and wandered the States playing shows for whoever turned up that night.

“When I wrote the book, initially I didn’t have any chapters,” Price says. “I just wrote a long, 530-page manuscript with no chapters and no ending. It was like Jack Kerouac — all on one scroll. I just had to get it out.

“I was refining the book while recording *Strays*.

They mirror each other, with similar themes. There’s a song and a chapter called ‘Hell In The Heartland’. The book is a snapshot of my whole life, but mostly of those struggles 12 or 13 years ago. The album is a concept record about my life. There’s a bit more freedom in writing songs — there are times when I’m talking about myself and times when I’m writing from a fictional place. Writing the book really helped me realise I’m a human and I’m messy. I make mistakes and I don’t even regret all of them.”



“Radio”. “When I met her, I had a child who was just a few months old. She came over and let me know that she was around if I had any questions about being a working mother. Seeing her travelling with her husband and finding ways to tour and make music was very inspiring for me. But that’s what she does — she creates that environment around her that is just so friendly and neighbourly and comforting.”

“WHEN you take a large dose of psilocybin,” Price explains, “if you go in with a question that you want answered and if you’re not afraid to look behind the veil to see who you really are and what you really want, you can see things from all new angles.” As her own band disperse for a break, a loud, fuzzed-out bassline bleeds in from the next room. Ignoring it, she continues recounting the mushroom trip that afforded her the clarity to kick the bottle. “It felt like this really weird miracle. I owe a lot to psychedelics and mushrooms. I’m not saying they’re for everybody, but I definitely think I wouldn’t be a musician today had I not taken my first mushroom trip. It’s been a long, weird road to get to the person that I am, but here I am.”

She documents her long relationship with the bottle in *Maybe We’ll Make It*. “I started drinking when I was 12 years old. I started smoking around then, too. I feel like I just lived my life early on. I was like a pirate living on the road and living really hard.” However, when her newborn son died in 2010, the bottle kept her from moving on to harder drugs. “Alcohol probably saved my life. I was in such a tremendous amount of pain, and if I hadn’t had that, I don’t think...”

She trails off, taking a moment to find her way out of a bad memory. A moment later, she starts again: “Everything has its time and its season, and I’m just happy that I lived through all that recklessness. I’m happy that I lived to tell it all.”

While sobriety doesn’t inform the lyrics on *Strays*, it did give her more focus in the studio and on stage. “I feel really free, like things are just a little easier now. Sometimes it sucks, because I feel things really deeply and now I’m not able to numb out. I have to deal with



“My secret weapon”: with Jeremy Ivey at Americanafest, Nashville, September 15, 2019

ERIKA GOLDRING/GETTY IMAGES

MARGO PRICE

my problems a little more, but that's good because it's not as much of a struggle. My voice is really strong and I'm healthier now than I've ever been."

But she's still living like a pirate on the high seas. During her first trip out to visit producer Jonathan Wilson at his studio in Topanga Canyon, she risked life and limb to rescue her beloved guitar. One night they all got alerts on their phone that a wildfire was spreading throughout the canyon, and many of the roads were already closed, including the one to their AirBnB. "There was some smoke, but we couldn't see flames yet," says Ivey. "They weren't allowing people to get through. But Margo got to the roadblock and just sped past the cop!"

"I think I was doing about 100 miles per hour along those canyon roads," she says with a laugh. "Jeremy kept saying, 'Forget about it, it'll be fine.'



Jonathan Wilson

But I was dead set on going back for my '65 Gibson. That was the guitar I played on *Saturday Night Live*. Some things are just irreplaceable."

The party that started during the couple's initial songwriting retreat in

South Carolina continued out on the West Coast when Price was joined by her band. "As soon as we were all vaccinated, we hopped on a plane," she says. "We were passing joints back and forth. This was before the first variant showed up. We were smoking a lot of baby jeeters, which are these joints rolled in kief and oil. The guys were drinking, I was bartender most of the time. Jonathan



On *Saturday Night Live* with her '65 Gibson, April 9, 2016

has this incredible cantina in his backyard. I was behind the bar most nights pouring drinks for everybody, even though I wasn't drinking."

Wilson recalls the mood being especially gregarious, even celebratory, as Price and her band relished their first freedoms. "The whole experience of them coming here to Topanga and getting their big-pimpin' AirBnB down the hill was the classic LA album-making experience," he says. "We went through copious amounts of weed and tequila, and that's pretty much how it needed to be done. But Margo's such a sensitive soul. She's always scanning the room and making sure everyone is happy and comfortable. She's real. She's the South. She's the Midwest. She's all of those unpretentious, beautiful things."

THE spirit of Topanga Canyon seeped into the psychedelic *Strays*. "We were definitely listening to a lot of Joni Mitchell," says Price. "David Briggs' house was right across the street. It was inspiring just knowing Neil Young had hung out there and recorded. A lot of times when you're in a studio in Nashville, you go sit outside and you're just looking at a parking lot. There's no vibe. But Jonathan has trails starting in his backyard, so you can go across this little bridge and hike up in the canyon. You just have to watch out for rattlesnakes."

Very quickly Price and her crew tracked enough songs for a double album; in fact, she hopes to release *Strays 2* sooner rather than later. But it took some prodding. More treacherous than the rattlesnakes in the canyon was Jeremy in the control room, in particular when it came time to track vocals for "Been To The Mountain". It's a cry of fury from someone who has struggled mightily for everything in her life and still isn't sure she has much to show for it, aside from her undying defiance. Halfway through, the song breaks down into a spoken-word rant that recalls Pat Benatar: "I've been called every name in the book. Go on, take your best shot. TAKE YOUR BEST SHOT!"

Initially, Price couldn't quite muster the outrage to sell those lines. "That part of the song really needed to be angry and violent," says Ivey. "But we were all too mellow. I'd heard this story about Etta James, how you had to get her really pissed off to get a good take out of her." So he leaned in and whispered something into his wife's ear. She recoiled and started screaming at him. "That was the take," she says. "He wanted to get me fired up and mad as hell, and he knew the one thing to say."

The couple have sworn each other to secrecy about what he whispered to her. "It's





AN ORIGINAL OUTLAW

Margo discusses her new collaboration with **Jessi Colter**

“JESSI Colter was a musician and country singer in the '70s. She was part of that whole outlaw country movement, with her husband Waylon Jennings, although she gets overlooked too often. She's on that [*Wanted! The Outlaws*] recorded with Waylon and Willie Nelson and Tompall Glaser. She ministered Johnny Cash back in the day, when he was going through his terrible problems with substance abuse and just feeling lost. She was a big part of that world.

“Jessi's in her seventies, but she still sounds so good. I produced a record for her called *Standing On The Edge Of Forever*, and my band played on the whole thing. We did it here in Nashville, and her son Shooter Jennings mixed it. She has all this memorabilia at her house in Arizona, and she found some of the songs we recorded in an old suitcase of Waylon's. People used to pitch him songs all the time, and he kept almost all of them, even the ones he didn't record. So there's some really cool stuff on it. We've been trying to get the record out for quite some time. It's one of the most beautiful albums I've ever heard, and Jessi's going to be opening for me at the Ryman and a few dates on the *Strays* tour.

“Everybody needs someone like her in their life. She gives me lots and lots of pep talks, lot of advice about being in the business and working with your partner. When I'm having a hard time, I can call her up and she's there for me.”

ALYSE GAFKJEN/RICK DIAMOND/GETTY IMAGES FOR COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME & MUSEUM

just between the two of us,” he promises. “I’m never going to tell anyone else, but it was very specific. It would have been incredibly cruel if I’d actually intended it. It also kinda fun, because I got off the hook. After 18 years of being with her, there aren’t many times when I can just say something mean and get away with it.”

As they tracked in Topanga and finished up in Nashville, Price knew she had a different kind of album, one that might reflect own musical tastes more specifically than her twangier records did. As different as it sounds, it’s still a Margo Price record, which means it’s about trying to stop or reverse time. She’s been singing about that ever since she opened *Midwest Farmer’s Daughter* with the autobiographical “Hands Of Time” and continues exploring that theme on new songs like “Time Machine” and “Landfill”.

But it’s especially pronounced on “County Road”, which was one of her favourite moments in the studio. They were trying to exorcise some ghosts on the bridge. It’s an everyday kind of memory, but the kind of experience that you cling to when someone dies. Jonathan took Margo and her piano player Micah Hulscher out into his dark garage, where he had an upright piano set up along with some old microphones. “I sang those lines, ‘*Remember when we got drunk that time in Ontario/Listening to Warren Zevon on the stereo*’. I sounded like a ghost. Micah pounds out this ominous chord on that piano, which was just a little out of tune. It’s such a big moment in that song and on the album, and it gives me chills just thinking about it.”

“WHEN we were out in Topanga, I was looking at houses on Zillow,” Price says in a near whisper, as though confessing to some secret sin. “I thought about going round putting letters in people’s mailboxes. It’s so hard to find properties out there.” She loved the vibe of the canyon, savoured the scrub-brush countryside and all the music history the place holds, so much so she considered leaving Tennessee and heading west.

Her relationship with Nashville, which she’s called home for more than 15 years now, has always been fraught. She struggled in the city for a decade before she found a label willing to release her music, and

even after her breakout success in 2016, she still doesn’t feel like she’s been quite accepted by the music industry. The city keeps growing and rearranging itself, pushing out the weirdos and diehards that Price and Ivey count as their closest friends. “I definitely think about leaving Nashville. I just don’t fit in here. I’m never going to fit in here.”

But she’s quick to point out that she’s tethered to this city. All of

her band lives here. Her kids go to school here. She and Ivey own some land out in the country, they have lots of close friends in town, peers and mentors alike. That, ultimately, is what keeps her here: all the people and the inspiration they provide. She’s built up her own community, her own shadow music industry. “When I tour next year, I’ll probably spend as much time travelling as I will at home. But I guess I’ve put down deep enough roots in Nashville. I wasn’t born here, but I’ll probably be buried here.”

Stray is out January 13 on Loma Vista Records

“I’m never going to fit in here in Nashville”

MARGO PRICE



Bra by Cymande

How a righteous funk anthem and future block party staple was birthed in a Brixton basement. “The bass was the genesis...”

A KEY scene in new documentary *Getting It Back: The Story Of Cymande* shows how DJ Jazzy Jay used to cut between two turntables to extend the exuberant breakdown of “Bra”, sending a Bronx block party into raptures. It’s no surprise that the track became a foundation stone of hip-hop, sampled by Sugarhill Gang, Gang Starr and De La Soul, as well as on Raze’s early house hit “Jack The Groove”.

So who were the impossibly funky crew behind it? Surely they were from Harlem or New Orleans? Or maybe Kingston or Lagos? Nope. “Bra”’s co-writers Patrick Patterson and Steve Scipio grew up on the same street in Balham, south London, after their families emigrated

to the UK from Guyana when they were kids. Coming of age in the late ’60s, they envisioned a band that would capture the spirit of the times – black pride, peace and love – while celebrating their Caribbean heritage. Their name came from a popular calypso about “a dove and pigeon fighting over a piece of pepper” – Cymande was the dove – and they recruited band members from south London’s Caribbean diaspora.

With lyrics that encouraged its listeners not to abandon the struggle (“*But it’s alright/We can still go on*”) “Bra” made a decent splash on its US release in 1973, following Cymande’s debut single “The Message” into the R&B charts and winning the band a support tour with Al Green. But back in the UK, the glass ceiling descended. Dispirited with the

lack of opportunities for black British groups, Cymande disbanded in late 1974. Patterson and Scipio eventually both studied law, going on to take up important positions in the governments of various Caribbean nations. As such, they were oblivious to Cymande’s second life as hip-hop progenitors. But word eventually reached them of their popularity amongst a new generation of crate-diggers, and Cymande reformed to jubilant scenes in 2014 with most of their original lineup intact. A new album is currently in the works, to follow the reissue of their original three albums.

“I had no idea,” says drummer Sam Kelly of Cymande’s miraculous rebirth. “One of the things that blows my mind is that we played in Brazil, we went to Croatia, all these places. My partner and I went to Australia a couple of years ago – we’d go out to a restaurant and hear our music being played in Melbourne, 12,000 miles away. It still puts a shiver down my spine.” **SAM RICHARDS**

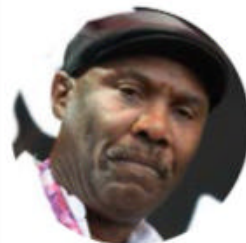
PATTERSON: I came to London in 1958, Steve came in ’63. And since then we’ve been together. Our street was full of people, many of whom came from our country, and we were all in the same community. So we carried our Caribbean culture with us. [*In the late ’60s*] we had a jazz group called Metre, which was the genesis of Cymande. We used to do Miles Davis’s “Footprints”, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, things like that. We liked to play in different time signatures. Looking back on it now, we were very inventive.

SCIPIO: For seven or eight months before we started to put Cymande together, we also played with a Nigerian band called Ginger Johnson And His African Drummers. Ginger was a well-

KEY PLAYERS



Patrick Patterson:
Guitar, co-writer



Steve Scipio:
Bass, co-writer



Sam Kelly:
Drums

Building a support structure: Cymande circa 1972





known performer, he played with The Rolling Stones at Hyde Park.

PATTERSON: All of it contributed to where we were as musicians, directing us towards our future musical style.

KELLY: We started in the basement of my family house on Crawshay Road in Brixton. The main thing they emphasised is that, come hell or high water, they wanted to do original material. I wasn't playing an instrument at all before I joined Cymande, but I used to listen to everything from James Brown to Hendrix, Sam & Dave to Pink Floyd. I was a blank canvas – I didn't want to sound like any other drummer. The person that had the most influence on my playing was Steve. He didn't play bass rhythmically, he played it lyrically. I was just trying to complement what he was playing.

PATTERSON: The support for black bands like ours was from places like Upstairs At Ronnie Scott's, The 100 Club, the Pheasantry, Café Des Artistes. Small venues. We played the Croydon Greyhound with Edgar Broughton.

SCIPIO: We started doing some shows outside London, in some of the northern clubs. But I don't think we were what they were expecting!

“We had unfinished business, but I didn't know it was going to take 40 years!” SAM KELLY

In some of them, it didn't go down very well...

PATTERSON: [*adopts bolshie northern accent*] “Do you know any Bill Haley? Come on!”

KELLY: Obviously we came across problems when we were trying to get record deals. They'd say, “You're an all-black band, you should try to sound like the Americans – Otis Redding or Curtis Mayfield.” But we didn't want to sound like that.

SCIPIO: There's so many versions about how we connected with [*producer*] John Schroeder. John says he was in Soho, was passing this club and heard this racket going on. But my recollection is that our booking agent brought John Schroeder to us. In those days, John was a cool fella! Long blond hair and a big white Roller.

KELLY: He liked what he heard and thought he could work with us as a producer, which is a bit strange in a way, because the people that he had

produced before – Cliff Richard or Helen Shapiro – were a million miles away from what Cymande was going for. But he let us just do what we did.

PATTERSON: We always give him credit for his commitment to the band. He liked what he heard and wanted to capture that, not to *produce* it or turn it into something else.

SCIPIO: Most of the first album was already written because those were the songs we were using on the road – they got perfected while we were gigging. For “Bra”, the bass was the genesis. How we were writing at the time is that the bass was used melodically. I'd go to Patrick with an idea and often he'd start putting stuff on top of that. In some songs, the vocals were the last thing to be developed. Normally it's the other way around.

PATTERSON: When I was laying things on top, I was just thinking about patterns to fit. I'm a touch player, not a heavyweight player,

so I'm bouncing off Steve rather than setting a thing myself.

KELLY: Unlike a lot of rhythm sections who are trying to lock in, we're all playing individual things, so you've got this mixture going on.

SCIPIO: “Bra” was one of the popular songs at gigs. The middle break

with just the bass and drums, as recognised in the documentary, people appreciated that even then.

KELLY: I'm playing four-to-the-bar on the bass drum. We were just trying to think how we could join the middle of the song to the end section. But the DJs turned this into a whole new record – amazing.

PATTERSON: When we came up, it was the time of “Say It Loud, I'm Black And I'm Proud”. You had the Black Panthers, you had the Black Liberation Front, you had artists who were articulating a black position and trying to make sure that black people recognised the importance of working together. The lyrics of “Bra” reflected that time.

SCIPIO: “Bra” is slang for brother. Within our community, everybody knew what it meant. It was only when we went to the States that you might have people saying, “Why are they singing about brassières?”

PATTERSON: Joey Dee was



CYMANDE



a talented, brilliant singer. He had a wonderful range, so we could put anything before him and he could sing it. And he had a good presence too. The voice was an instrument in Cymande, but it still gave him scope for demonstrating his talents.

SCIPIO: De Lane Lea was a wonderful studio because it was used for recording movie soundtracks as well as bands. Everyone had their little compartment to control the spillage and we just performed as if we were doing a live gig. We were young people, uninhibited! We didn't have responsibilities, so when we went in the studio it was just pure enjoyment. A lot of producers want to put their stamp on the music, but John wanted the raw element of what he heard.

PATTERSON: And he produced it well. You could hear every instrument in its own space. Working with John was easy.

SCIPIO: It was very exciting to see our records on the charts in America. John wanted us over there as soon as possible to ride on the wave. It was like going to the centre of music, the Mecca.

KELLY: In England, we were playing relatively small venues. To then be suddenly supporting Al Green on these huge stages... I was half a mile away from Patrick and Steve! But Al Green's drummer was amazing. For the first week, he would stand by the side of the stage and watch me play, and afterwards he'd come over and give me some advice. I'll forever be grateful for that.

SCIPIO: The Apollo [in Harlem] had a reputation for not tolerating below-par performances – and the crowd would let

FACT FILE

Written by: Steve Scipio and Patrick Patterson

Recorded at: Pye Studios, Marble Arch, London; De Lane Lea Studios, Soho, London

Produced by: John Schroeder

Personnel: Joey Dee (vocals), Patrick Patterson (guitar), Steve Scipio (bass), Sam Kelly (drums), Pablo Gonsales (percussion), Mike 'Bami' Rose (sax, flute), Peter Serreo (sax), Derrick Gibbs (sax), Ray King (percussion, vocals)

Released: May 1973

Highest chart position: 51 (US R&B)

you know! So I think some of us had some apprehension about it, but the week we did there was fantastic. We had Jerry Butler coming in and shaking our hands.

KELLY: The Apollo was a real pit, to be honest! The paintwork was crumbling, it smelt... but there was so much black music history oozing out of those walls. It was a great experience.

SCIPIO: It was very frustrating to have your music appreciated by that number of people and then to come back here and there being no-one at the airport, not even one reporter asking about how the tour went. No interest, no articles, nothing.

PATTERSON: It was demoralising. We were entitled to some recognition. So you come back and you find nothing... It says a lot about the industry and how it deals with us as black musicians. There was little or no promotion here, and no airplay.

SCIPIO: [After a while] we all recognised that performing in front of 40,000 and then doing gigs to 300 people, that's not where we should be.

PATTERSON: We can't go backwards in that sense. Who does it help? It doesn't help black musicians or the aspirations we might have to achieve things in music. So let's take a rest and see where we go.

SCIPIO: I joined Mike ['Bami' Rose,

Cymande flute/sax player] in a South African band called Jabula. I played with them for maybe five years, but I wasn't satisfied with just being a squad member in somebody else's project. I started my law degree, and that was the last time I played any live music until Cymande came back together. I moved to Anguilla to work in the attorney general's chambers.

PATTERSON: After Cymande, I was musical director for the Black Theatre of Brixton, then I went back to my law studies. I practised in chambers in England, then I worked for the government of Dominica.

SCIPIO: I certainly wasn't aware of what was going on [with "Bra"'s use by hip-hop DJs]. The documentary was an eye-opener for me!

KELLY: Myself and Bami Rose kept playing professionally. I'd be somewhere setting up or packing away my drums and I'd hear "Bra" or "The Message" being played, which was really satisfying. But I didn't have any idea what the DJs in the States were doing. It wasn't 'til the film came out that I found out people had taken our tracks and remixed them. Watching these DJs talk about Cymande's music in such reverent terms was just amazing.

SCIPIO: I'm happy people see something in our music that's influential. To listen to something and appreciate it is one thing, but for it to impact on you in such a way that you take elements of that thing and make it part of your own, that's on an entirely different level.

KELLY: We had unfinished business, but I didn't know it was going to take 40 years!

SCIPIO: When we came off the road in the '70s, it was never intended to be a disbanding, just a hiatus. But the renewed interest in us provided the opportunity to put into effect the plans we had when we first decided to call it a day.

PATTERSON: It was very exciting to see that we had, if you like, travelled through time. We were now faced with a bunch of young people appreciating our music.

SCIPIO: We've just completed a tour of Canada and the US, and at the end we took three or four days off and said, "We'll do a couple of tracks." And they went well.

PATTERSON: We recorded at a great studio in LA. It suited us, because we still cut live. This will be quite an important album, I think. The aspiration has to be consistent with what we have already created.

SCIPIO: The spirit of the performance should still be recognisably Cymande. Not like a load of old doddering guys just going through the motions! 🎧

Cymande's self-titled debut album is reissued by Partisan on December 16

TIME LINE

1971: Cymande formed in south London
1972: The band's self-titled debut album, featuring "Bra", recorded at Pye Studios and De Lane Lea in London

December 1972: "The Message" released as a single in the United States, eventually reaching No 48 on the *Billboard* Hot 100
March 1973: Cymande tour the United States

supporting Al Green
May 1973: "Bra" released as a single, reaching No 51 on the *Billboard* R&B charts
November 1986: New York house producers Raze

reach No 20 on the UK charts with the "Bra"-sampling "Jack The Groove"
March 1989: De La Soul's epochal *3 Feet High And Rising* features a

prominent "Bra" sample on "Change In Speak"
September 2014: Cymande reform to play their first show in 40 years at London's KOKO venue



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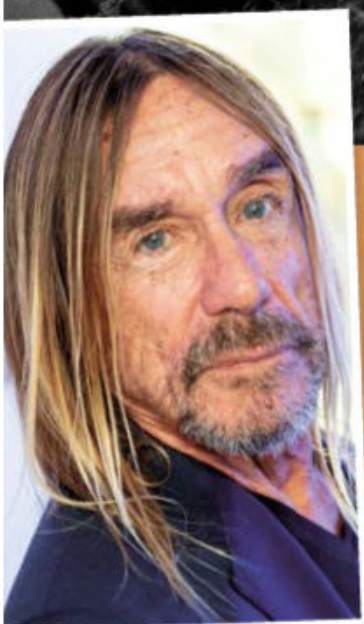
GIMME DANGER!

A band in disarray. A fancy hotel in West London. Heavy riffs and delinquent ballads. Fifty years since the release of **IGGY AND THE STOOGES'** *Raw Power*, Nick Hasted convenes a crack team of heads – including J MASCIS, JIM REID, MARK ARM and BOB MOULD – to dig deep into one of the most influential records in rock history. “All three Stooges albums are equal to me,” says **IGGY POP**. “But *Raw Power*, that’s the big one.”

Blond ambition:
Iggy in full flight at
the Whisky A Go
Go, LA, October
30, 1973



Mobbed deep: at LA's Whisky A Go Go, Oct 30, 1973



In 1972, The Stooges were on life support. Dropped by Elektra after *Fun House* flopped, they returned home to Detroit to lick their wounds. There, a new version of the band took shape, with James Williamson, second guitarist since 1970, replacing Ron Asheton

at Iggy's right hand. Invited to London by David Bowie and his MainMan management, Iggy seized the chance to rejuvenate The Stooges. Written while roaming West London's leafy streets, *Raw Power* became a blueprint for the city's punk explosion a few years later. On the 50th anniversary of its release, the album remains a masterpiece of slashing guitars and savage, misanthropic blues.

"I realised that there was almost no-one in the world who wanted to save The Stooges," Iggy tells *Uncut*. "I knew that there were a few malcontented, strange people out there who were actually going to like this, but there was no apparatus to gather them up. I knew our management didn't want it, I knew that radio didn't understand it and I knew that most people wouldn't get it. On top of that, we were all one step away from becoming junkies and the ones that weren't junkies were completely out of touch with reality. I knew what was going to happen."

Williamson followed Iggy, then later Ron and Scott Asheton crossed the Atlantic – lured to the UK by the promise of gigs that never materialised – with Ron demoted to bass duties. This reconfigured lineup became Iggy And The Stooges. "I had decided the people from MainMan were our best shot to do something," Iggy tells us. "At least they would respect art. They did. They put us up in London very well. We didn't relate to English musicians or producers, and we resolved to do it ourselves. They respected us and left us alone. We were given every artistic requirement – a place to rehearse, and a good studio. The band had a nice house to live in. When I couldn't come up with the lyrics and live with them at the same time, they put me in the basement of Blakes Hotel. I'd stick my head out and see Lord Snowdon and Princess Margaret. 'Oh, I say, it's Iggy Pop!'"

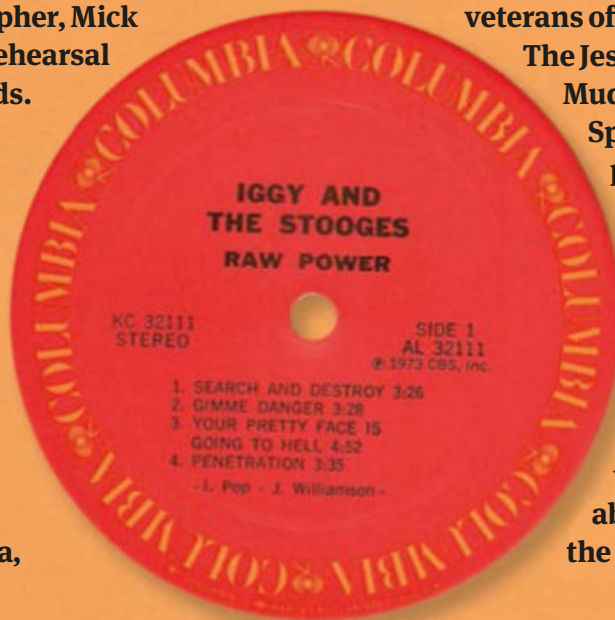
"The fact that there was a very competent, well-educated photographer, Mick Rock, to document our rehearsal sessions helps," Iggy adds. "Because people have heard about all the wild shit going down around those sessions and they can see it on the album sleeve, too. That's entertainment!"

Prevented from working in the UK after they finished the album, Iggy And The Stooges stumbled back to America,

where they imploded in a series of confrontational, deranged gigs. *Raw Power*, though, lives on. "I had the faith that if we did our best, things would come around," Iggy says. "Of course, they did. We were very well rewarded for that record, later. 'Search And Destroy' has become very popular. My personal favourite, though, is 'Shake Appeal'. Because that was the only three minutes of my life when I was ever going to approximate Little Richard. It's practically impossible for me to hit a sustained high tone like that and scream that sort of hyped-up, crazy hillbilly rock thing that I always liked. But 'Search And Destroy' is the record's masterpiece. I knew it when we did it. I felt a sense of relief that it made me artistically secure. But I knew I was still socially fucked."

Raw Power's foundational influence – on punk's lineage in particular – is underscored by the musicians *Uncut* has assembled to celebrate the record's eight tracks, including veterans of Hüsker Dü, Dinosaur Jr,

The Jesus And Mary Chain, Mudhoney, L7 and Spacemen 3. Our panel of heads even includes two part-time Stooges... "All three Stooges albums are equal to me," Iggy concludes. "But *Raw Power* is the high-priced spread when you're talking about The Stooges. That's the big one."



SIDE 1

1 SEARCH AND DESTROY

Chords scythe, a guitar solo screams, drums pound... *Reborn*, Iggy And The Stooges kick off *Raw Power* with urgency and attitude. All this in the seconds before Iggy howls out one of the greatest opening lines in rock history: "I'm a sleep-walking cheetah with a heart full of napalm"



J MASCIS, DINOSAUR JR.:

The Stooges was a big thing for Dinosaur Jr. The whole sound and the attitude fed into our music. I love *Raw Power*. The production of it's

so crazy – the guitars are so loud, and the drums are so tiny. I remember hearing how Scott Asheton threw the record across the room when he first heard it! What do I think of Ron Asheton on bass? I mean, I can barely hear it. It's different than the other Stooges albums. The guitar playing and songs Iggy and James Williamson were writing together were more developed. It reminds me more of the MC5. More danceable and a bit more normal in the guitars, even though the sound was more crazy. "Search And Destroy" stands out as the hit for me. It's the riffs, the power, that leaps out, it's awesome and heavy. Everything else just blends together, like one big song. The attitude, the tone and the mood doesn't shift.

Is it weird that Iggy was writing about Vietnam while sitting under a tree in leafy Kensington? I never think about Kensington or Vietnam when I listen to "Search And Destroy". Ron never wanted to play those *Raw Power* songs [in *J Mascis + The Fog*], but when he finally agreed to, it was cool to hear, but it was weird. There were none of the guitar solos. It makes you realise what a big part the Williamson leads are. Without them, that track's a lot more basic.

2 GIMME DANGER

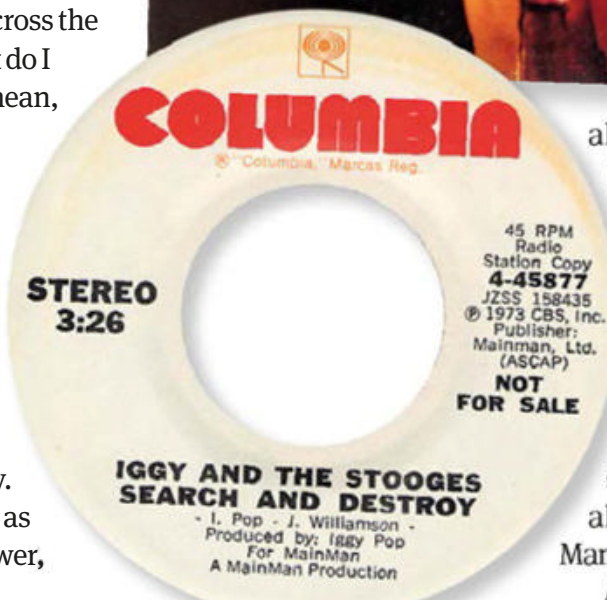
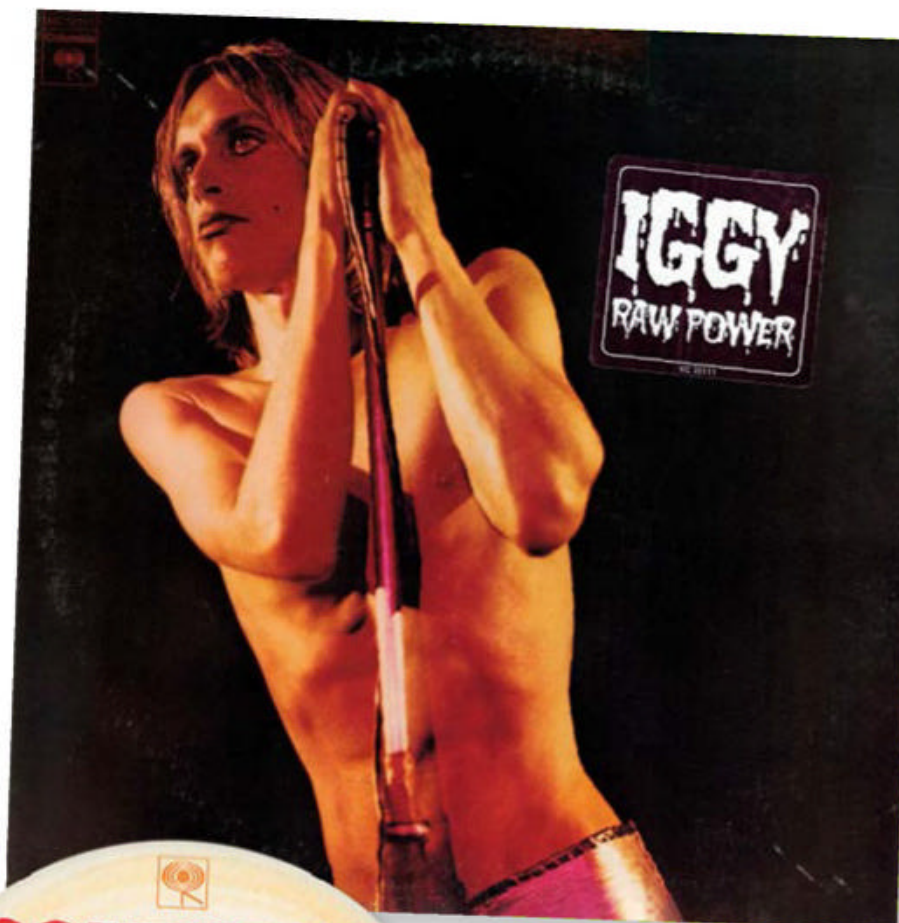
Leaving us breathless after the opening salvo, the band pivot to the other extreme for this eerie, semi-acoustic song that finds Iggy in unlikely suitor mode: "Swear you're gonna feel my hand"



JIM REID, THE JESUS AND MARY CHAIN:

They were selling *Raw Power* cheap in all the record shops in '76. William bought it just before punk, and then punk came along, and it seemed that everybody loved this record. It is a punk

record, no doubt about it. It was the Mick Rock cover photo of Iggy that grabbed me first. The photos on the back, too – what's this all about? There was a slightly demented look to these guys, something dangerous about it. There was nothing like this at the time. It wasn't the Bay City Rollers. Lyrically, they stepped it up for this record as well. "Search And Destroy" is like William Burroughs, and pro-war – very violent. I always felt Ron Asheton never had a guitar lesson, that what he had was



"IT'S A PRETTY BIG LEAP FROM EARLY STOOGES RECORDS"

BOB MOULD

always in there, he just plugged himself into the guitar. James Williamson probably did have lessons, but he's equally amazing. With some of his solos, you think, 'How does he do that?' With "Gimme Danger", it sounded like they were trying to write a Doors song – and a good one. Iggy was always a fan, he worked with Ray Manzarek after Jim Morrison died.

Again lyrically, it's interesting in a way they hadn't been before. "Kiss me like the ocean breeze" is pure Doors. It's like "Moonlight Drive". There's violent imagery as well. It wasn't that faded-jean, James Taylor thing that was going on. Iggy And The Stooges were opposite to that. They were a guiding light for the Mary Chain.

3 YOUR PRETTY FACE IS GOING TO HELL

"Alright!" Brace yourself for more Stooges swagger. Iggy sounds shredded as he keeps up with Williamson's wildly distorted guitars and the Ashetons' propulsive rhythm section. The sound of punk, four years early



BOB MOULD: *Raw Power* is a pretty big leap from the early Stooges records. Beyond being really influential, it's an amazing snapshot of America in decline, the dead-end nature of cities like Detroit and a divisive era. It's a pivotal moment in

American storytelling. It's a great irony that they recorded it in Fitzrovia. I guess you can take the kid out of Detroit! *Raw Power*'s also a wild record, with lots of distortion. "Your Pretty Face Is Going To Hell" is the essence of its unhinged quality. When you listen inside the track to what everybody's doing, it's terribly chaotic, which is what I liked about the record. That song is loose and wild. It sounds like a lot of improv's going on. Iggy's voice is primal – it's the cathartic, crazed onstage Iggy. James Williamson is just fireworks. It sounds like somebody had a stopwatch, and said, "Let's just do this thing." With Iggy's vocals, James is finding any moment he can to push something through. That back-and-forth is a lot of the feel of this record. It's a classic American ➤

THE RAW AND THE COOKED

Raw Power's mixes

"I FELT up to the task of producing *Raw Power* while we were making the music," Iggy recalls. "But as soon as we finished I became drained and unsound. So it was going to be impossible for me to mix that thing correctly. I was carrying these two giant boxes of 24-track tapes around London. Later, I carried them to America. I became obsessed. The treble couldn't be trebly enough. The bass couldn't be low enough."

Instead, Bowie took the helm in a rushed, violently treble-heavy mix which left the Ashetons almost inaudible. This became *Raw Power*'s most distinctive feature. "That topky, screechy sound with hardly any bottom end was what punk was all about," argues Jim Reid. "A lot of weird things going on in it sonically are accidental – because everything's in the same clangy, top-end area, so everything's crashing into everything else. But punk rock was born that day."

Convinced by Sony to remix *Raw Power* properly in 1997, Iggy's abrasively impolite version found little favour with fans who preferred the extreme mix they knew. "I hear other sounds in Iggy's version," J Mascis says. "Little pianos and more handclaps and yells that distract me. It's not what my body expects to feel, when I know it so well."

Bob Mould agrees: "Listening to Iggy's version, all the super-distorted crackle got taken away. It's tame compared to how it struck me as a teenager."



IGGY AND THE STOOGES

rock before punk rock record. It brings a lot of the vitriol which first-wave punk picked up on. But the fact that “Your Pretty Face Is Going To Hell” jams out, unravels and disintegrates is more free jazz than the Ramones. The Stooges still had some of that more enlightened, freeform, rolling with whatever’s happening in the room.

4 PENETRATION

Side 1 closes with the nastiest-sounding song on *Raw Power*. Iggy adopts an eldritch hiss for this song, heavy on demonic mood and murky atmospherics



SONIC BOOM: Jason [Pierce] had a copy of *Raw Power*, in about '82. It was a popular record to listen to in our speed-freak days. “Search And Destroy” sounds like how you feel when you’ve just done a big shot of speed! It sounded amazing

in 1982. That post-punk, gothic era couldn’t compare to The Stooges. It was a decade later, but they sounded fresh as daisies. I don’t think you get Steve Jones’ guitar on *Never Mind The Bollocks* without James Williamson’s big power chords, and soloing within chords. You wouldn’t have The Damned or The Gun Club, either. It’s a really awesome Stooges lineup – Williamson had that ripping distortion too. “Penetration” is where they use slightly more restrained, reeled-in power, rather than the full-ahead “Search And Destroy”. The vocal’s not leery, but it’s in that territory. It’s got a worn-out menace to it. It sounds like something bad’s about to happen. Like “Gimme Danger”, it has a menace to it, and it broods. Some of my favourite Stooges moments, like “We Will Fall”, are not stereotypical. They mete it out a bit slower, with a different energy. It’s a really nice contrast on this record.

Blood bother: Iggy at Max’s Kansas City after cutting his bare chest falling on a table, New York, July 31, 1973

“IT SOUNDS LIKE SOMETHING BAD IS ABOUT TO HAPPEN”
SONIC BOOM

SIDE 2

1 RAW POWER

Iggy confirms *The Stooges’* debt to '50s rock’n’roll, as his jagged Jerry Lee piano keeps time



SCOTT THURSTON, STOOGES:

I bumped into James Williamson at a session in Los Angeles in 1973. He asked, did I want to play a gig with The Stooges? I said, “Sure.” So James and I rehearsed in Hollywood. He said, “It kicks off this way,” and he started playing “Raw Power”. “We’ll be playing that riff a while...” I met the band in Detroit, had cocktails, and we opened for Bob Seger. It was pretty chaotic. But The Stooges were always calm. They had Iggy and these songs. They soldiered through, and were themselves, no matter what. Keep going ’til there’s only bodies! At this point, I think they were all basically homeless. James lived at an apartment you rented weekly. I was the only one who had a house and car. It was doomed to fail, but also remarkably successful, in an outlaw way. They were still musically ambitious. James especially wanted to write new songs. Tunes like “Heavy Liquid” and “Open Up And Bleed” were scratched out in our two rehearsals. Every gig, the band would come out with that “Raw Power” riff, then Iggy would come out, usually. It’s not an easy riff to hold together, but we could play it for six minutes. I could Jerry Lee Lewis to my heart’s content! So does Iggy, with his whoops and hollers! I always felt worried about Iggy, though. He has a vulnerability that made your heart reach out for him when he took the stage. You felt like he was your child. I felt emotionally connected to Iggy at all times.

2 I NEED SOMEBODY

Slow and grinding ballad, with Iggy laying it down for the girl of his dreams: “Honey, I’m sure to steer you wrong”



MIKE WATT: James Williamson told me, “Me and Ig went to see T. Rex when we made *Raw Power*. Ig said, ‘That’s the band I want to be.’” There’s a bunch of trippy things that came around to make

Raw Power what it is. James told me that most of the songs were written on an acoustic guitar in the hotel room. I don’t think Ron ever wrote songs on acoustic guitar. I don’t think he had one! Another thing about *Raw Power* is the songs that didn’t come out on the record, like “I Got A Right”, which is the template for punk drumming. “Shake Appeal” has got that chromatic thing, so the notes are clustered close. It’s really powerful, like all the bones in a tiger’s back, when he’s hunching and they’re all coming together and lining up. With “I Need Somebody”, it’s like that lick’s been around for a million years but I haven’t heard anybody else do it. It’s got that slow blues feel, but the way it’s delivered there’s no bogus note, there’s no filler. Everything gets a snap, everything’s in a dynamic, everything’s got a tension to it. It’s like cooking with just enough of everything, man. Again it works that interesting chromatic thing that James brought in, writing everything on acoustic. I can hear that, even though it’s so electrified.



Backstage at the Whisky A-Go-Go, October 30, 1973: (standing, l-r) Scott Thurston, Ron Asheton, James Williamson; (sitting) Iggy, Scott Asheton

3 SHAKE APPEAL

Iggy channels Little Richard in a more straight-up, ramalama rock'n'roll affair



DONITA SPARKS, L7:

In the late '80s, The Stooges had such a huge, lingering influence on us and our underground peers up in Seattle. We appreciated their rawness and simplicity – and their dirtbag quality. They had an outsidership that was very endearing. You could imagine them as teens and young men making this music. There was something very American about it, too – suburban but urban, working-class but middle-class, and being in your basement, bummed. There's a Doors influence and a moodiness when Iggy starts crooning. Oh, that *Raw Power* cover photograph is just so hot! Like, goddamn! So sexy, and yet so other than that. I love the hip-swivelling chaos of "Shake Appeal". The initial riff during the verses is fantastic. It still makes me want to put a fringe dress on and just shake! It's got a very go-go dancer thing to it. Then the lead guitar solo is very concise, ends abruptly with an echo, and you're out. It's like the beginning was the big turn-on, the lead solo is sealing the deal, like you're going to do it. Then finally, Iggy starts cooing seductively. He's cooing like *he's* been seduced and he's the one who's now completely melting. The handclaps, man! L7 used a lot of handclaps. The Stooges are secure enough in their masculinity for a shit-ton, too. When this song comes on, it makes all conversation stop, and I'm off my barstool dancing. It's an undeniable track.

4 DEATH TRIP

We end up, less than half an hour later, with this six-minute requiem for The Stooges' dream. "I know I'm doomed for putting out music like this," Iggy realised...



MARK ARM, MUDHONEY:

When I got into punk rock, everything I read about it pointed back to Iggy And The Stooges. The first two records were out of print, no-one gave a shit, so I heard *Raw Power* first. The production of it was so completely different to anything I'd ever heard. In the late '60s and early '70s, you couldn't find a band that sounded like The Stooges. James Williamson is just incredible – the guitars are just slashing. On the live stuff from the era, like *Georgia Peaches*, you can really hear what a good bass player Ron was. I wish he was in the mix more! There's obviously a darkness to that record thematically that wasn't on the other two and some of it seems autobiographical. There's no pity or weepiness. It's the opposite of a confessional singer-songwriter. But I feel that the Ig was maybe in a pretty bad place. "Death Trip" is a hell of a song. It's the perfect end for the record. And it seems at that point he wasn't even sure he'd be around much longer. Thank God that wasn't the case! 🙏

With thanks to Jaan Uhelzski. Iggy Pop's new album *Every Loser* is released on January 6 through Atlantic Records and Gold Tooth Records

IGGY AND THE STOOGES' LAST STAND

The *Raw Power* band revived

SCOTT Thurston stuck it out 'til The Stooges finally hit the wall, a full year after *Raw Power*'s release. Desperate weeks of midnight flits from motels and druggy self-destruction finally brought one of rock's most notorious sagas to a close. "We had some pretty rough gigs," Thurston deadpans. "We played this place in Michigan called The Farm, where somebody cold-cocked Jim [Iggy], and that was the end of that show! The last gig, of course, was at the Michigan Palace." Semi-bootleg *Metallic KO* – which outsold *Raw Power* in the '70s – captured the show on February 9, 1974, where enraged bikers hurled bottles at the band and Iggy immolated "Louie Louie". "Frightening? Somewhat," Thurston considers. "But we had the attitude of being cool. It was really sad in its way, but inevitable. Dead of winter, with no more gigs. That's how it ended." There was, it seemed certain, no way back. Yet in 2003, Iggy reconvened the original Stooges, with Ron Asheton back on guitar, for redemptive gigs and a new studio album, *The Weirdness*. "It was 125 months, some of the best of my life," Mike Watt says of his spell as Stooges bassist. "These guys were serious about working the room, like vaudeville. They got fucked up when they were younger. They were straight, cold sober when I was with them."

After Ron Asheton died of a heart attack on January 6, 2009, Iggy announced the return of James Williamson and Iggy And The Stooges. "I get call a from Ig, saying James is coming back," Watt recalls. "James lives far away, so just me and Scotty practised *Raw Power* for months in this Hollywood pad. That was a trip, to be skeleton crew for *Raw Power*. Whaddaya call that, an internship?"

Williamson's comeback was tough. "Jim Williamson's guitars never came out of their cases when he went to work for Mr Sony [as a senior Silicon Valley executive]," Watt explains. He had to learn how to play again. Think about it, there's no wow-wow [high wah-wah] on *Raw Power*. James learned to play Ron's songs. The whole thing was a trip. They had to relearn shit that they invented. James was very earnest, like Ron. They were both really serious about playing Stooges music." A *Raw Power* show at Hammersmith Apollo on May 2, 2010 was among the triumphs for the resurrected band.

"You never know when it might be the last gig," Watt sighs. "With Ronnie it was in Ljubljana. The last one with Scotty was in Houston." The Stooges' second act ended there on March 15, 2014, when Scott Asheton died of a heart attack.

"Scotty's spirit was so kind," Watt reflects. "He always put a little Buddha up in his room and I have one he gave me. They were incredible cats."



"These guys were serious": the reanimated Stooges in 2003

The Meters

Funk session supremo Leo Nocentelli looks back on a stellar career

FOR much of the past 60 years, the four musicians who make up The Meters have been a constant thread in New Orleans musical history. While still in their teens, all four – Art Neville (piano and organ), Zigaboo Modeliste (drums), George Porter Jr (bass) and Leo Nocentelli (guitar) – were the house band in Allen Toussaint’s studio, playing on big singles by Lee Dorsey, Ernie K-Doe, Betty Harris and Professor Longhair, and touring with Otis Redding. Initially known as Art Neville And The Sounds, they renamed themselves The Meters in 1965 and built up a following as the hottest funk band on the circuit. Paul McCartney and Led Zeppelin hired them to play private parties; The Rolling Stones enlisted them as a support act for six months; and they served as the backing band for everyone from Dr John to Robert Palmer to Labelle.

“The four of us were kinda telepathic,” says guitarist Leo Nocentelli. After they split in 1977, Nocentelli continued a lucrative session career, spending 35 years in California, but moved back to Crescent City six years ago. “Even when I lived out west, I spent a lot of time here,” he says. “I always said I slept in Burbank, but I lived in New Orleans.” Here he goes through some highlights from his and The Meters’ career. **JOHN LEWIS**

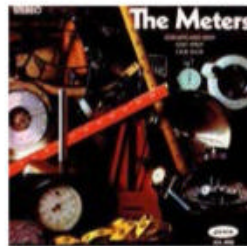


The Meters in 1969 (l-r): Leo Nocentelli, Art Neville, Joseph 'Zigaboo' Modeliste and George Porter Jr

THE METERS

JOSIE, 1969

The fab four's debut, filled with wiry, spartan funk instrumentals



NOCENTELLI: We recorded this at Cosimo Studios, on Camp Street, in what is now Jazz City. This was

the studio run by Cosimo Matassa, the place where they recorded all those classic songs by Little Richard and Fats Domino and Ray Charles and where I'd played on loads of Lee Dorsey recordings. It was like a second home to me. This album was just a bunch of instrumentals that I had in my head, songs like “Cissy Strut” and “Live Wire”. I used to have trouble naming instrumentals – one was just a little spiky blues riff and I didn’t have a name for it, and I saw “6V6 LA” written on the tube amplifier of an old radio in the studio, so I named the song “6V6LA”! I used to wake up in the night with a riff in my head and I’d have to go into another room, play it on the guitar, record it on tape and write down the chords. The reason why they’re credited to all of us is because musicians make the song. I might come up with a riff, which would sound completely different if it was being played by Tom, Dick or

Harry. But, when it went through the filter of Art, George and Zig, it was transformed! For instance, I came up with the riffs for songs like “Here Comes The Meter Man”, but it was transformed by Art’s organ line. That’s how songs are written!

THE METERS

JOSIE, 1969

Sophomore album featuring the much-sampled funk take on the theme from Oh! Calcutta!



This album was pretty similar in structure to the first one – mainly riff-based instrumentals.

“Look-Ka Py Py” was like an old New Orleans chant, I think that was Ziggy’s idea. Man, that one has been sampled a lot by the hip-hop guys! The song “Oh, Calcutta!” I think was introduced to us by a couple of people, who said, “Man, you should record this, it was a hit on Broadway.” We weren’t fans of the original, to be honest – in fact we’d not even heard it until then – but it was some good chord changes to riff over. It was only many years later that I heard a big song on the radio by a singer called Amerie, it was called “1Thing” and it was the biggest R&B hit of the year. It’s based around my guitar and

Ziggy’s drums, that’s all. I see this second album and our third album, *Struttin’*, in the same light, really, although by the time of *Struttin’* we’d got more confident doing some vocal tracks, like the “Wichita Lineman” cover. “Hand Clapping Song” was one of Ziggy’s chants, based on an old New Orleans thing. “Ride Your Pony” was our version of a song that Allen Toussaint wrote for Lee Dorsey – I played on the original of that. I think we used to take things that were already pretty funky and make them really funky!

LEO NOCENTELLI

ANOTHER SIDE

1971 (RELEASED LIGHT IN THE ATTIC, 2021)

The Meters guitarist channels James Taylor and Elton John in an introspective side-project



After *Struttin’*, our label Josie went bust. While I was waiting for a record company to give us a deal, I was

listening to a lot of acoustic music, like James Taylor’s albums *Sweet Baby James* and *Mud Slide Slim*. He used nice chord progressions. I started listening to the lyrics, which told stories, so I started writing songs with stories, something The Meters never did before. I wrote 10 songs and recorded demos in Allen Toussaint’s

studios. I had George and Ziggy and Allen with me, I did a few overdubs. Then all of a sudden, The Meters had a record deal, and I was so excited that I gave up the acoustic thing. I forgot about the tapes I made and I assumed that they had been destroyed after Hurricane Katrina in 2005, when Allen’s studio was 12 feet deep in water. But it turned out that someone had bought Allen’s master tapes and kept them in storage in California for nearly 50 years. My tape was among them. The storage compartment ended up in the hands of Mark Nishita, who works with the Beastie Boys. He told me he had this tape and started rattling off the titles – my mouth hit the floor! So *Light In The Attic* released it last year. The most played song on the album is my version of “Your Song”. It was very gratifying that Elton John got in touch with my record label and told me how much he loved my version.

THE METERS

REPRISE, 1972

Finally signed to a major label, and getting into the storytelling process



This album came just after I’d recorded my acoustic album. We were so elated to get a record deal



Funky five: circa 1975, with Cyril Neville, left, added to the lineup

with Warners – or a part of the Warners empire called Reprise – so I completely ditched my solo project and put all my energies into The Meters. Our playing and our writing went up a level on this album. I was inspired by my solo album to do some more vocal tracks, and we all had some ideas for this. We even tried a ballad – Neil Young’s “Birds”, cos we liked the original on *After The Gold Rush*. We wouldn’t have even considered that on our first three albums! I think this was the only album where we each had individual writing credits. Art Neville came up with some great ideas here, really getting into that New Orleans boogie thing – you can hear the influence of Professor Longhair on tracks like “Smiling” and “Cabbage Alley”. Usually it was me and Ziggy who wrote most of the material – I’d write a guitar riff and he’d often start chanting melodies and writing lyrics while he was drumming a groove. He was great at that. “Getting Funkier All The Time” and “You’ve Got To Change (You’ve Got To Reform)” are examples of him doing that. My favourite song here is “Lonesome And Unwanted People” – again, that’s a proper song that tells a story. That’s something we were getting into by this stage.

THE METERS REJUVENATION

REPRISE, 1974

Reaching their peak, with funk classics like “Just Kissed My Baby” and “Africa”

I think this might be my favourite Meters album. I put a lot of work into that record. It’s filled with really great songs – a mix of grooves and proper songs. I think our writing here was at its peak. “Just Kissed My Baby” was one of my guitar riffs that’s become our most sampled song, I think. From Public Enemy on, everyone has sampled that! I think it’s because we left so much space, so it was easy to clip out the guitar riff, or the bass line. Again, it was Ziggy who started singing over the top and came up with the melody and the lyrics.

Allen Toussaint was always our producer, but he was often just a producer in name. By this stage he was barely in the studio. He wrote some horn and string arrangements and stuff, but generally he left us to it. I don’t mean that disrespectfully – I say that to commend him. If you see that the music is being better created without you being there, and you have the balls to believe that, the right thing is to back off a bit in the studio. He got us in the zone and left us to it.



UNCUT CLASSIC

“It Ain’t No Use” is one of my favourite songs I’ve written – it’s the kind of thing that I would never have tried had I not made that solo album in 1971. Not many R&B bands did 12-minute tracks in those days! But really, I’m proud of all these songs. “Loving You Is On My Mind” is super smooth. “People Say” is a great little mix of what we all do well: a little guitar riff, a vocal idea from Ziggy, Art’s organ riff, George’s bass, and Allen Toussaint’s horn arrangement. The Grateful Dead used to play “Hey Pocky A-Way” at their gigs, the Red Hot Chili Peppers did a version of “Africa”. If you really want to hear how good Ziggy was at bringing out the New Orleans roots of funk, listen to “Jungle Man”. It’s classic New Orleans Congo Square drumming,

but turned into funk. No other bands at that time played like that, because no other bands had Zigaboo Modeliste! All the musical aspects of that record were impeccable, as far as I’m concerned.

THE METERS FIRE ON THE BAYOU

REPRISE, 1975

Getting deeper into the swamp-funk sound, with another Neville brother onboard



Art as our keyboard player, of course. But there was also Aaron, the singer; there was Charles, who played tenor sax; and Cyril who played percussion. Cyril is an unbelievable talent, he’s phenomenal. To have someone like that around you, that remarkable talent, and not use it, would be a sin. So we all agreed to have Cyril come in on the record. And it gave us a bit of a lift. I think the writing stood close to New Orleans feeling, gumbo, then immediately it changed when we did the last album. It’s the most Louisiana-sounding ➤



Put on your headdress: The Wild Tchoupitoulas with Big Chief "Jolly" Landry, circa 1976

album we ever did. Even the song "Liar" – I think we first heard that being done by Three Dog Night, it was like a heavy rock, a heavy country-rock thing. But we turned into a piece of New Orleans funk.

It was around this time that we played a private party for Paul McCartney, and then met The Rolling Stones, who asked us to tour with them. So we did a bunch of massive venues with them in America and Europe. There were folks in the crowd who didn't want to hear us, I guess – they'd been in line for hours and just wanted to hear the Stones – so we could have been the second coming of Jesus Christ and they wouldn't have been happy! But I think we won a lot of them over. It was a crazy, crazy tour. And they're still good friends – I talk with Keith all the time.

THE WILD TCHOUPITOULAS

MANGO, 1976

The Neville Brothers and The Meters unite to collaborate with a Native American chief



That was the brainchild of Aaron, Cyril and Art [Neville]. They had an uncle called Big Chief

Jolly, head of the Indian tribe at Mardi Gras, and they wanted to do an album of his songs, with us as his backing band. Not many people outside of New Orleans know about the Native American links to that city. Congo Square was traditionally a place where the blacks and the Indians would meet up and play drums, get together, chanting stuff. But you gotta remember that at Congo Square they also used to sell

"We played a private party for Paul McCartney, then we met the Stones, who asked us to tour"

LEO NOCENTELLI

black slaves and Indian slaves. They'd be on the stage, up for auction for whites to pay for them. That actually went down in this country. So there are lots of connections between the Indians and the blacks, a lot of intermarriage, a mix of cultures hanging together. My grandmother was a Blackfoot Indian.

New Orleans is very linked to Caribbean culture. There are a lot of rhythmic links. "Meet De Boys On The Battlefront" is a kinda calypso, based on "Rum And Coca Cola", but that calypso beat sounds very natural in a New Orleans accent. "Hey Pocky A-Way" is one of our tunes from *Rejuvenation*, but done in a Congo Square style, with a lot of harmonies. There's that pulse you get in New Orleans music that you find all over the Caribbean – it's like if you count to eight and put the emphasis on the one, the four and the seven. You hear that all the way through this album.

THE METERS TRICK BAG

REPRISE, 1976

The funk kings try their hand at disco



done a better disco record. New

The opening track on this is "Disco Is The Thing Today". I sometimes wonder if we could have

Orleans music had strong links with funk, but it was trickier to make that link with disco. I think we did that with Labelle, but I don't think the Meters did it so well. And, by the time we did, it was too late – disco was already out of date! But there are some great tracks on this album. "Suite For 20G" is me paying tribute to James Taylor, doing a kinda jazz guitar solo. There's a version of Earl King's "Trick Bag", he's a bit of a New Orleans legend. We did "Honky Tonk Women" after touring with the Stones – Mick always loved our version of that. There are actually some covers from the *Trick Bag* sessions that didn't end up on the finished album – "Come Together", "Big Chief", "Love The One You're With" – they were on a re-release, and on a compilation [*Kickback*]. One was a version of the track "Big Chief", one of the most important Mardi Gras songs to come out of New Orleans, and one which I actually watched being recorded in the 1960s – I had just recorded a session with Allen Toussaint, and then Earl King and Professor Longhair came in the studio and recorded that in front of my eyes! But I think our last album, *New Directions* (1977), where we got David Robinson to produce instead of Allen Toussaint, that might have been a better album. It's taking those big New Orleans horn charts in a different direction.

PATTI LABELLE

EPIC 1977

The Meters back the Philadelphia soul queen on her solo debut album



I've done session work on a ton of albums over the years – Dr John, of course, but also artists like

Robert Palmer, Etta James, the Neville Brothers, Peter Gabriel, all sorts. I played on some big hits, like "Lady Marmalade" by Labelle. But I have very fond memories of another Patti LaBelle album. It was her first solo album. I had been invited to play guitar by the producer David Robinson, who was recording the album at the Automatt studios in San Francisco. He also asked me if I had any material. I'd written this song called "I Think About You" but I just had the chords and the melody. I wrote the lyrics on the plane up to San Francisco. When we came to record it, I played it on the piano. I'm not a piano player at all, but I could play these gospel chords in 6/8. And for some reason, Patti's musical director, James Ellison, he tried to play what I was playing in the studio but it didn't feel right, he couldn't get the feel. So he asked me to play the piano. So I got a credit as the piano player! I think it's my only one. But it's a terrific record, really underrated. It's on the cusp of funk and disco, and there are great performances. Me and Ray Parker Jr are on guitar, George [Porter Jr] is on bass, James Gadson on drums, all the Womacks are on backing vocals. Amazing stuff. 🎵

A Message From The Meters: The Complete Josie, Reprise & Warner Bros Singles 1968-77 is available on Real Gone Music; Another Side to Leo Nocentelli is available on Light In The Attic Records



Meter made: Patti LaBelle at the Automatt recording studio, San Francisco, March 28, 1977

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Nothing But Heart

Uncut pays tribute to **MIMI PARKER** as friends and collaborators including Jeff Tweedy and Steve Albini celebrate the music and influence of **LOW**'s beloved vocalist, songwriter and instrumentalist. "She was the calmest of oceans," learns Stephen Deusner. "She was the ebb and flow of it all."

Photo by PIETER M VAN HATTEM

“WE’VE always had the two voices, mine and Alan’s, I guess those have maybe been the constants in Low,” Mimi Parker told *Uncut*

in 2018. She was discussing the band’s 12th album, *Double Negative* – an astounding reinvention that blasted the band’s trademark harmonies with gales of sound and distressed electronic textures. *Uncut*’s Album Of The Year, this most radical departure in a career defined by exploratory detours nevertheless sounded like Low, precisely because it featured those two voices. “We realised that we’re always going to have those, which means we’re always going to be recognised as Low.”

When Parker died in November after a two-year battle with ovarian cancer, it was not just the passing of a beloved vocalist, but perhaps it also marked the end of one of America’s most influential bands. Born and based in Duluth, Minnesota, Low crafted slow, careful songs that could grow almost unbearably intense without increasing volume. In silence, they found a kind of loudness. As instrumentalists they were sophisticated in their austerity:

as a guitarist, Alan Sparhawk is both imaginative and restrained, while Parker’s drumming was artfully spare, her rhythms subtly nudging the songs forward.

But it was their voices that truly defined Low – his expressive and soulful, hers more reserved but conveying a sense of calm, steadiness and intense compassion. Whether she was singing about faith, alienation, salvation or loss, Parker added a unique and powerful humanity to their songs, offering consolation and reassurance – a reminder that such a harsh world could produce immense beauty. Their songs sounded like an outgrowth of their marriage, while Parker in particular never came across like anything resembling a rockstar.

“She did not possess any kind of ego,” says Jeff Tweedy, who produced their 2013 album *The Invisible Way*. “She was funny and centred and unflappable. She seemed like somebody who would have fit in any room across the broader Midwest, whether it was a baby shower or a punk show. There was just an air of normalcy about the both of them, a lack of pretence that made everything that came out of them sound even more weighted with poignancy. They had a very nonchalant way of doing something extraordinary.” ➤



"Funny and
centred and
unflappable":
Mimi Parker
in 2011

MIMI PARKER

Pinpointing the humanity: Parker at Teatro Dal Verme in Milan, October 5, 2018



“There was a magical quality to Mimi and Alan’s voices twinning,” adds Steve Albini, who produced 1999’s *Secret Name* and 2001’s breakout *Things We Lost In The Fire*. “When the two of them would sing a line together, it sounded like it was a perfect construction – something that had been canonised for centuries. It is a sound like a cathedral bell or a church organ. But the most distinctive thing about Low is that their music didn’t reach out to you. Everything about Low is understated. Everything is gentle and beautiful. It’s like you’re discovering an old gravestone out in a field rather than having someone drop a gravestone on you.”

RESERVED both on stage and off, Parker at times came across as a reluctant public figure. As Zak Sally, the band’s first in a long line of bass players, wrote in a public statement following her death: “All of the things that inhabit (and sometimes define) damn near every artist you’ve known and loved: some desire to be recognised, to be paid attention to and lauded – she didn’t have it. In fact, I’m sure she didn’t want it when it happened to come her way. What she did, and what you heard and saw – it poured out of her so naturally that she didn’t identify it as ‘talent’ or a ‘unique ability’, and found it strange when other viewed it as such.”

Parker had to be coaxed into forming a band with Sparhawk, whom she had known since they

were children and whom she had dated since they were in high school. Over the years he encouraged her to play a larger role within the band. Eventually, Sally wrote, she “wrapped her head around the fact that this meant

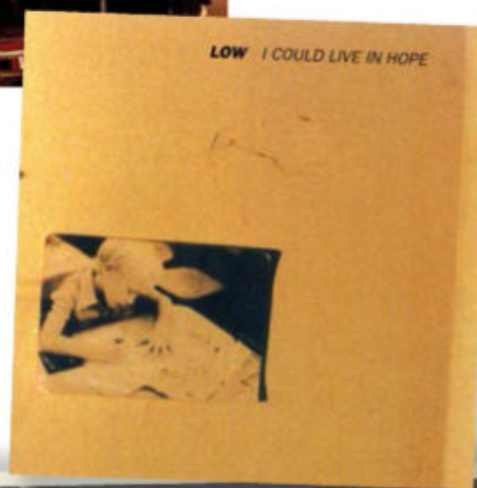
something to people in a way that she had to come to grips with. That however much she blew off the beautiful things that came out of her mouth and her soul, other people got very real things from it. Hope, and solace. And she felt that responsibility.”

Low were a product of the Midwest. Parker and Sparhawk both grew up in rural north-central Minnesota, roughly three hours northwest of Duluth. Parker did chores on the family farm outside Clearbrook (population roughly 500), and she saw the often harsh reality of smalltown life. As a kid she made extra money cleaning up at the local tavern, where she mopped up the aftermath of too many wasted evenings. She later addressed her father’s battle with alcoholism on “Laser Beam”, from 2001’s *Things We Lost In The Fire*. Like all her songs, it’s defined by its economy of language, as Parker uses only a few words to evoke the darkest and most desperate human behaviour: “Leave me in the car tonight, rest your drunken mind”. As both lyricist and vocalist, she had a talent for freezing a moment and turning it over and over, as though examining it from all sides and pinpointing the humanity in the experience.

For Parker, Low was a spiritual pursuit, one that sprung from the couple’s Mormon faith. “We kinda had a really spiritual moment; you know, we think it’s probably in our spiritual destiny to work together,” Parker told the podcast *Sheroes* in August 2022. “Looking back, I’m kinda of amazed that it actually worked.” Even when Low started to find success beyond Duluth, they never hid that aspect of their lives. Instead, they incorporated it into their music, both Parker and Sparhawk writing and repeating verses like mantras as a means of pondering matters of belief, morality

and mortality. Rather than didactic or proselytising, their songs – especially Parker’s – are open-ended, grappling with difficult questions while acknowledging that the answers might be too personal to share with anyone else.

“Their religion informed a lot of their music in ways that



A product of the Midwest: the first Low lineup with Zak Sally (left)

were not always subtle,” says Albini. “But there was nothing annoying about it. I could tell it was a personal thing for them, that is was something that mattered to them, that they were going to weave that into their music the way they weaved all the other complexities of life into their music.”

THINGS happened fast for Low. Before they had even played a live show, they were invited to record their debut by Kramer, who had produced one of their formative influences, Galaxie 500. With Sally, then still in high school, Parker and Sparhawk drove from Minnesota to Hope Township, New Jersey, just outside New York City. It was the furthest they had been from home, but Kramer recalls they were already professionals, confident in their playing and determined to capture a particular sound. “We never once discussed what was going to happen in the studio. If a band needs pre-production, they’re not ready to come into the recording studio. Low was always ready. Those first two records come together like they were never apart.”

“RELIGION INFORMED A LOT OF THEIR MUSIC”
STEVE ALBINI

others, but I saw it as confidence. Her demeanour was one of total coherence and patience and attention to the work at hand. She was the calmest of oceans. She was the ebb and flow of it all.”

Those first two albums – 1994’s *I Could Live In Hope* and 1995’s *Long Division* – set the template for Low’s sound: unhurried tempos, austere arrangements with lot of negative space, minimal lyrics that had maximum impact and, most of all, the easy blend of those two voices. Initially, they were associated with a new wave of bands labelled ‘slowcore’, including Ida from New York, Acetone from Los Angeles and Bedhead from down in Texas. Sparhawk and Parker rejected the label; they’d devised their sound far from any music scene and, aside from touring with Ida in the late 1990s, had no association with those other acts. With each new album, they used those defining elements as a jumping-off point for experimentation and endless tinkering, working with a succession of producers and collaborators.

During that time, music and family were intimately but not always easily intertwined. They drove themselves on most tours, did their own setup and teardown, and brought their kids along on the road and into the studio. “When they did *The Great Destroyer* with me, Mimi was pregnant with Cyrus,” recalls producer Dave Fridmann. “When they came back in 2006 for ➤

As for Parker, “Mimi might have uttered a hundred words to me over three days during the making of the first LP,” says Kramer. “It might have seemed like shyness to



With Jeff Tweedy, producer of 10th Low LP *The Invisible Way*, at The Loft, Chicago, January 2013

Mimi Parker: The Lost Interview

IN January 2013, Low sat down for a chat about their latest album, *The Invisible Way*, recorded at The Loft in Chicago, with Jeff Tweedy. Alan Sparhawk was running late, so Mimi Parker gave a rare solo interview – which has remained unpublished until now.

UNCUT: You’ve worked with some prominent producers. What role does a producer play for Low?

MIMI PARKER: We’re always willing to take any advice we can get, because Alan and I have been working together a long time. It’s nice to get a different point of view. We’ve always been pretty organised when we go into the studio. We do our best to rehearse a lot and get the songs where we think they should be. But we have an open mind. We’re willing to go where the songs need to go. None of the guys we’ve worked with... they’ve barely called themselves producers, especially Albini. He’ll call himself an engineer long before he’ll call himself a producer. Still he gave us some ideas and put his two cents in.

How did you end up working with Tweedy? People would say to us, ‘You really should work with Jeff.’ Finally, our schedules just came together and some time opened up. But we already had a relationship, and we’re familiar with the Wilco aesthetic and how those guys make it happen. We knew it was going to be a good fit for us. Jeff is really such a friendly, easygoing guy, and he knew that we’ve been doing this a long time. He wasn’t going to come in and overhaul the whole thing, but he just had a few things here and there. It was actually really refreshing and nice. Honestly, though, it would be really interesting to go in with a producer who’s very hands-on, just to see what they would do. We might be kicking and screaming the whole time, but it’d be interesting.

You take more lead vocals on *The Invisible Way* than on the last few albums. I was just writing a lot more. Alan was really encouraging me to step up a little bit. I had fun working these songs out. There’s one song, “Holy Ghost”, that Alan actually wrote, and we recorded the demo with him singing it. It was really beautiful, but he had been pushing me: “Maybe you should sing lead on a few more songs.” I finally said all right. We

changed the key and I just sang it. It worked out. It’s actually one of my favourite tracks.

Do you ever write together?

It seems like the longer we’ve been doing this, the more we’re inclined to write separately and then come together for the finishing touches. I’m not sure why. Maybe it’s just survival. We realise that that’s what works for us at this point. We’re pretty open to suggestions. We’re not that precious about anything. It would just fall apart.

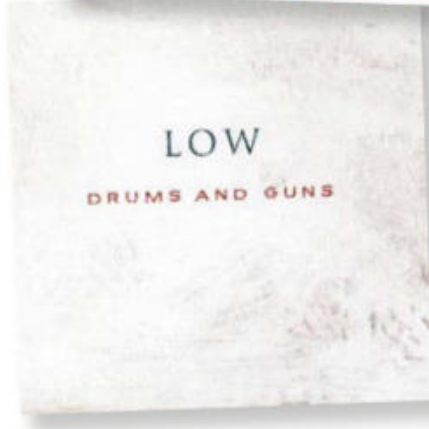
There’s more piano on this album as well. When I heard these songs, I heard them on our piano. So I would go down to the basement and play the piano and write. Once I got a concise idea down, Alan and I would get together and hash out the structure. Sometimes it’s hard to get away from that. You really get to know a song done a certain way or with a certain instrument.

Are you trying to re-create the studio sound on stage? Or looking for a different sound? For some of the songs, we really liked the sounds we got in the studio, so we try to re-create them. But we’re not slaves to re-create that sound at all. In my estimation, if you can play a song sped up or slowed down or with other instruments and it still has a beating heart... that’s the key. If a song is good enough, you should be able to mess with it and play it however you want. We’re just trying to find the essence of the song and get it out there.

How does your relationship with older songs or previous albums change over time, especially considering you’re working with different people? I’m amazed at how I can look back on a group of songs that we’ve done and I can see what was happening with us subconsciously. I was actually talking to Alan’s dad, and he said we are so run by our subconscious. We don’t even have an idea how much. I feel like that’s how we are, how our songwriting is, too. We can go back and look at it in a calculated manner, and I’m personally amazed by what develops. Writing and recording songs is almost like having a child. A child comes out and it’s definitely a creation of the two parents, but it takes on a life of its own. Most of the time you can’t even explain why your child is behaving like that.

MIMI PARKER

Slowly trinity:
(l-r) fourth Low
bassist Steve
Garrington,
Parker and Alan
Sparhawk in
February 2011



Guns And Drums, he was just a baby and they brought him to that session. They were out tracking a song, and it's one of those very quiet songs of theirs, just barely above the noise floor of the room. They finished and asked how it sounded. I had to tell them I had absolutely no idea because Cyrus is just screaming his head off in the control room. I couldn't hear the speakers at all. But it was fine. They were a family and they lived that all the time. It wasn't separate from the music they made."

Says Tweedy, "It's great when there's a really prominent living example of a married couple that's endured by having a creative outlet and a collective artistic expression. It's really a high level of intimacy to begin with – to share your life with somebody – and then to add music to it allows some of that intimacy to be heard. I think it makes people better when they get to witness something like that."

As with her songwriting and singing, Parker took a less-is-much-more approach to playing drums. She devised a small, personalised drumkit that consisted of a snare, cymbals and floor tom. Starting on their debut and throughout their entire catalogue, she plays in a very particular style:

a spare, dreamy kind of kosmische that subtly drew on the rhythms of krautrock, her beats so unsyncopated that it became its own weird kind of syncopation. It might have seemed simplistic, but within their songs, her beats sounded sophisticated, the steadiness of her rhythms alternately disarming or reassuring.

When producer Matt Beckley flew up to Duluth to record Low's 2011 album *C'mon*, he not only slept in the kids' room at their home, he also saw just how exacting Parker could be about her drums. "We had to get an array of floor toms," he recalls. "We basically had every floor tom in Duluth, and we tuned them all to different notes.

She would play different ones depending on the songs, almost like a xylophone. She was an incredible drummer. But she would be the last one to tell you that."

While touring with Low for last year's excellent *HEY WHAT*, bassist Liz Draper saw just how precise a percussionist Parker was. "If there was an opportunity to share drums with another act or play somebody else's snare, it was not going to happen. The tone Mimi wanted was the tone Mimi wants, and she wasn't going to make that sacrifice. She had this cute little thing she took on the road that she called the Worm. It was a little

dampener that she had handsewn, sort of like a beanbag that she would set in different positions or on different places on her drums to get different tones. She was always going to make the extra effort to get things to sound the way she wanted them to sound."

Her role as Low's drummer, however, was more apt to change than her role as a singer. When they began incorporating drum loops and fashioning static into stark rhythms on their later albums, she made no protest. "I didn't play as much drums," on *Double Negative* she told *Uncut*. "I'm not that precious about my instrument, so I was willing to step aside and let these guys experiment a little bit with the rhythms."

That adaptability served them well at every stage of their career, as Low displayed a readiness to mess with formula, to jettison everything that had previously defined them. Well, almost everything. As experimental as their music was on their last two records, the caustic blasts of static on *Double Negative* and *Hey What* only reinforced the humanity of their voices.

"I admired the way they intentionally disrupted their aesthetic," says Albini. "Whenever they would begin a new batch of songs, there would be new elements added. Their music got slightly

denser and they started adding more production elements. But the thing they started with was the beautiful and gripping ways their voices were paired, and that remained the centrepiece of their music throughout. They changed the wallpaper a lot, but they never did anything structurally to the house."





Hymn and her: Sparhawk and Parker in 2021

DESPITE their acclaim, despite the draw of bigger cities and more lucrative markets, Low never left their home in Duluth. Those voices always emanated from the wilds of northern Minnesota, where Parker and Sparhawk raised their kids, attended church and supported other local musicians. “Alan and Mimi have always been mentors and supporters of the music scene here in Duluth,” says Dave Simonett, singer and guitarist for Trampled By Turtles. “They’ve collaborated with so many people here and helped so many of us out in so many different ways.” That might mean taking them out on tour or producing an album or just jumping on stage during hometown shows. “I learned a lot about negative space in music from them. I learned a lot about listening to the people next to you. They’ve been very inspirational to everybody up here.”

Parker’s funeral in Duluth reflected the unique community the couple had built over the years. Held at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints they had attended for decades, it was crowded with musicians they’d worked with over the years, fans

who’d memorised their albums and church members who only knew Alan and Mimi as a couple with two kids and an unusual profession. The church pianist and organist played an instrumental version of Parker’s delicate “Point Of Disgust”, from Low’s 2002 album *Trust*, and per her request, Tim Rutilli performed one of her favourite songs, Califone’s “All My Friends Are Funeral Singers”. Afterwards, they served profiteroles from Parker’s own recipe and gave out squares from a family quilt.

“They have a lot of beautiful people in their lives,” says Draper. “They stayed close to their families. I’m really grateful for that. I’m grateful that they had their church and that they had built this

strong community. Everyone’s going to need it now.” That may be Parker’s ultimate legacy as an artist. An amazing singer, a compassionate songwriter, an intuitive instrumentalist, but she saw music not as a vehicle for herself, but as a means of binding people together. “She was always aware of what was going on with the people around her, and she could make every situation seem like it would be OK. She had that wonderful power.” Parker made us all feel like family. 🙏

“ALAN AND MIMI HAVE ALWAYS BEEN MENTORS”
DAVE SIMONETT



Like family: the Low bassists at Mimi Parker's funeral in Duluth, November 10, 2022 – (l-r) Liz Draper, Steve Garrington, John Nichols, Zak Sally and Matt Livingston

“We’re not Kansas!”

Low’s collaborators pick their favourite Mimi Parker performances



“SEE-THROUGH” LONG DIVISION, 1995

A perfect example of Low’s musical economy, as they craft a powerful performance with only a few notes and even fewer lyrics

Kramer: “Through a glass wall at Noise New Jersey, I

watched in utter amazement as Mimi laid her soul bare on this song. First take. Flesh and blood. Mathematicians often describe the rapturous understanding of how the universe works as ‘knowing the mind of God’. Once or twice in a lifetime, if you’re lucky, there are similar raptures of understanding. True euphoria is so very rare in the recording studio, but on that day I heard the simultaneous sounds of bliss, sadness, elation, and perhaps even a modest understanding of the mind of God.”



“NOTHING BUT HEART” C'MON, 2011

A true family affair, with Parker singing a countermelody to Sparhawk’s lead and their two kids joining them at the end

Matt Beckley: “The only time I ever saw Mims get angry or

frustrated was when we recorded this song. There’s a bit when everything drops out and it’s just five Mimses singing the chorus. I really pushed for that moment, but she wasn’t having it. She stomped out of the control room and was like, ‘We’re not Kansas!’ But she came back in and absolutely crushed it. She put her whole heart into an idea she didn’t agree with and gave it a chance to succeed. The best singer of our generation should probably have been more arrogant, but she wasn’t.”



“HOLY GHOST” THE INVISIBLE WAY, 2013

Low’s version of a gospel song, written by Sparhawk, sung by Parker, and later covered by Mavis Staples

Jeff Tweedy: “‘Holy Ghost’ is a great example of the patience and control that Mim had, yet

it’s so inexpressibly moving. The slower they would play, the more cohesive the song would become, almost like they were working with a force that had more to do with geological time than human time. They were tapping into the same kind of force that made a canyon or a mesa. I was happy to be the facilitator of Mavis covering this song. I think that meant a lot to them.”



“DAYS LIKE THESE” HEY WHAT, 2021

An anthem of perseverance, with Parker’s clear, consoling voice offsetting disruptive blasts of static

Dave Simonett of Trampled By Turtles: “The last time we played

music together was a testament to Mimi’s talent and incredible strength. We asked Alan to sit in with us when we played a large outdoor show in Duluth last summer. We knew Mimi wasn’t feeling so hot and Alan warned us after soundcheck that he might not be able to come back for the show. As we got close to ‘Days Like These’ on the setlist, we saw Alan had actually made it back. And Mimi was there! Somehow she’d found the strength to get herself out of the house to join us on stage. They came up and sang that beautiful song with such power. It brought tears to my eyes.”

NEIL YOUNG

"HAVE YOU SECURED YOUR LOAD CORRECTLY?"



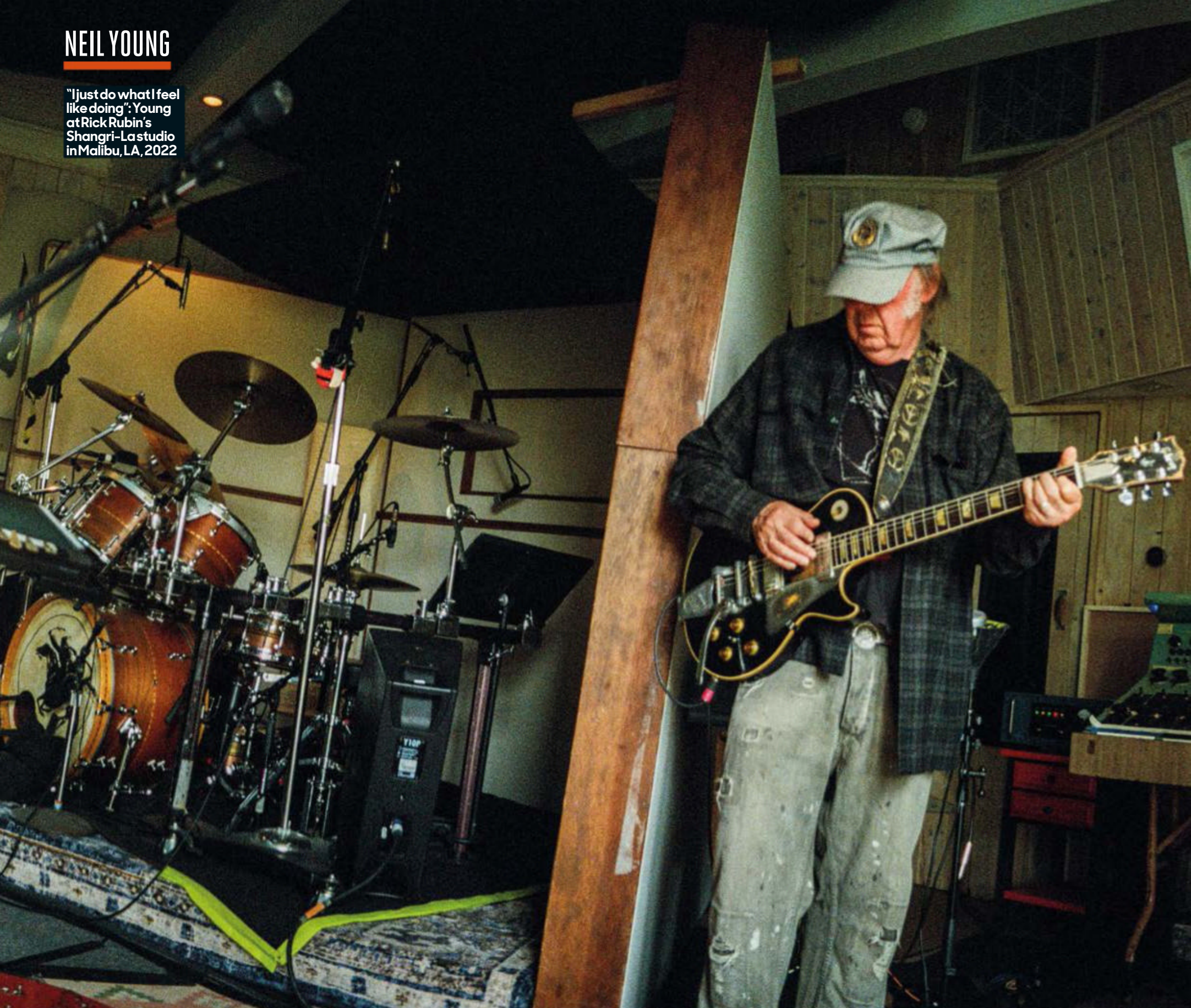
NEIL YOUNG is out there in the wilderness, travelling on his bus back towards his Canadian homeland. This literal journey into his past also seems a suitable metaphor for Young's peripatetic 2022. Over the past 12 months, this most capricious of musicians has hurtled backwards and forwards through his history and the present day – from 1970s 'bootlegs' via mythic lost albums and powerful new recordings with his doughty lieutenants Crazy Horse before arriving, finally, at a 50th-anniversary edition of his celebrated album *Harvest*. In this exclusive interview, Young – accompanied by Crazy Horse and producer Rick Rubin – looks back over a prolific year and attempts to make sense of the different, sometimes contradictory Neil Youngs who have emerged along the way. "I got a lot of stuff to clean up," he tells Damien Love. "I've got a big mess that I left behind."

Photo by JOEL BERNSTEIN



Ready for the
country: Young
at Broken Arrow
Ranch in Northern
California, 1971

"I just do what I feel like doing": Young at Rick Rubin's Shangri-La studio in Malibu, LA, 2022



NEIL Young is out there somewhere. The only problem is, nobody seems to know where. Two minutes before *Uncut* is due to meet Young on Zoom to talk over his astonishingly productive 2022, there's a call from his team. "Neil asks can we put it back a little? He's driving right now."

No problem. Whereabouts is he?

"Yeah... Not actually sure."

Some hours later, another of Young's ground crew struggles heroically – but in vain – to hook up a connection. As various technical options are attempted then aborted, *Uncut* asks where Neil is right now?

"Uh, East Coast somewhere... I think."

Eventually, we're given the number of the phone Young carries in his pocket – a device, as he will later explain, that was fundamental in the creation of his remarkable new album, *World Record*, his 42nd studio album and, significantly, the third he's made in a row now with his most redoubtable collaborators, Crazy Horse. With a sudden quickening of pace, *World Record* has arrived less than 12 months after their

previous album, *Barn*. In the stubborn on-off partnership that has endured for over half a century – and bears all the scars and passion to prove it – it's the first time Young has ever gone into the studio with the band three times back-to-back like this.

"Yeah," nods Horse bass player Billy Talbot when that's put to him a few days later. He leans forward, raises his eyebrows. "Interesting, huh?"

The number works. Young is finally there, the sounds of the highway swishing by him. But where exactly is he?

"Where I am? I'm in Canada. I'm on my bus, in Canada."

Not East Coast USA after all, then, but on the road, heading into the mythic landscape of his childhood. Hearing him say it – especially while considering *World Record*'s cover, which features a striking photograph of his father, the writer Scott Young, in earlier days – instantly brings to mind

one of Young's most fragile and forlorn songs: "Now I'm goin' back to Canada, on a journey through the past".

In one way, that's what much of 2022 has been for Young, as he has continued the herculean project of wrangling his sprawling archive into an order that satisfies him, both at his extraordinary, ever-evolving online repository – neilyoungarchives.com – and via a series of physical releases. This year alone, in addition to making *World Record*,

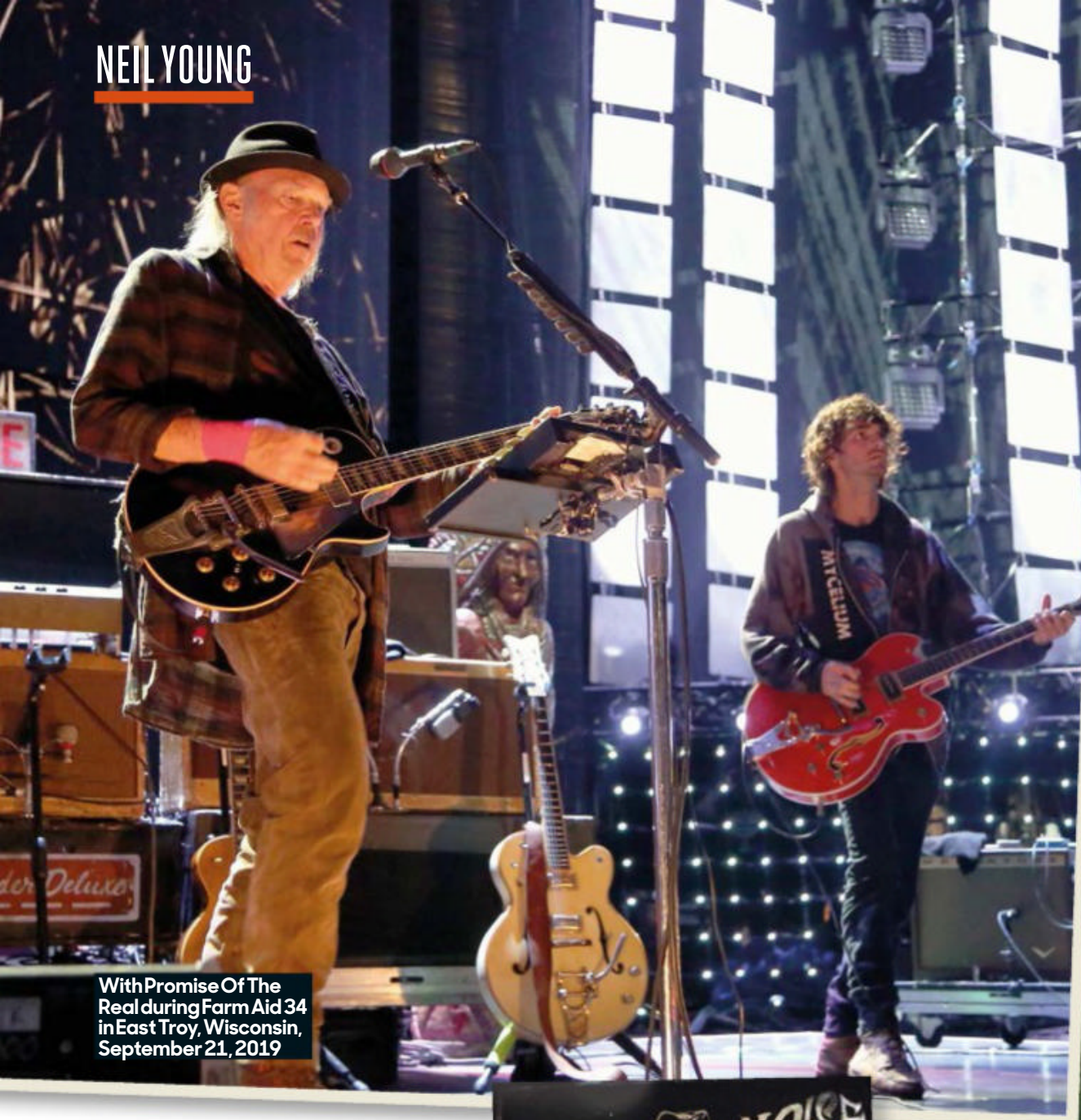
Young has issued four historical live albums – two from 1971, one from 1974, one from 2019; resurrected 1989's hair-raisingly brilliant "Eldorado" EP, a maelstrom of electric guitar originally released only in Japan;

and, at long last, revealed *Toast*, an album he cut with Crazy Horse back in 2000 and then immediately shelved, for clouded reasons. Unveiled 22 years later, it turns out to be one of the most magnificent things they've ever done.

**"I KNEW
TOAST WOULD
COME OUT
SOMEDAY"**
NEIL YOUNG



FEBRUARY 2023 • UNCUT • 91



With Promise Of The Real during Farm Aid 34 in East Troy, Wisconsin, September 21, 2019



IN the winter of 2021-22, Young's muse tracked him down on a lonely track in the Rocky Mountains, where it started nagging him in a way it never quite has before. While in the world beyond, the Covid pandemic mutated, COP26 faded into memory and Russia intensified its military build-up along the border with Ukraine, Young got into a routine of taking daily hikes through the woods near his place in Colorado.

"I was walking in the forest a lot," he recalls. "Walking in the snow, in the Rockies. I would always be whistling as I walked along. I eventually realised that every day I was whistling a different song."

Sometimes these melodies arrived with words attached: "*The world is in trouble now*", ran one of the most persistent choruses that came to him in the woods. Mostly, though, they were just tunes from nowhere, songs without a home, in danger of dissolving on the wind. "I started recording the whistling as I walked," he says. "On this flip phone, same one I'm talking to you on now."

After he'd caught eight or nine, Young transferred the fragmentary songs to his computer for safekeeping, with no purpose in mind. Soon after, though, he began to feel the itch to record again. "I was thinking, 'Well, I wouldn't mind trying to make another record,'" he says. "I feel like doing it, it'd be nice to see the guys and play some music. But I didn't really have many songs. Then I remembered I'd whistled all these songs into my phone, so I got the computer out and started adding words."

The lyrics that came to him reflect both the situation in which the tunes first appeared –

images of nature, blue skies, sparkling water, falling leaves, snow on trees; a recurring theme of walking – and the wider global situation, with intimations of war and protest, virus and ecological disaster.

Alongside comes the frayed but dogged hope it might all still be fixed; that there could be a future again, even if the natural landscape he describes in the songs is often the one preserved in his memory of his childhood.

"My memory of nature and what it was for everyone," Young says. "When it was more natural, more pure, and more itself, without having to battle all the things that are happening now. So, not so much a memory of the way things were – although it obviously is that too, because that's when things were a lot better than they are now for Earth."

Underlying all these *World Record* songs is the sense of a man who has reached a certain age and is keenly aware of how time keeps passing. "*I'm so grateful to have lived for all these years*", he declares in the haunted "I Walk With You". "*I'm beyond the time I had to know*", he says in "The World (Is In Trouble Now)". Some of the songs are entirely simple. Others just look that way.

Lofgren recalls Young called Crazy Horse early during this writing process: "He said he was writing, but he had just a few songs, so he was thinking maybe by later in the summer he'd be ready to record. Then, this was around mid-April, he called again and said, 'Hey, the writing's really picking up. Might be a bit sooner.' Then he called back and said, 'I think I'm ready.' I said, 'What does that mean?' He said, 'May 1.' That was a week-and-a-half away.

"It was unexpected, but it was born of inspiration, and excitement. Neil was in a bit of wonder that he'd written an album, not on an instrument, but just walking down the road."

"The songs just came out really quickly," Young says, still sounding a little mystified. "Within a period of about two days, I wrote all the lyrics. I never changed a word."

BUT why did he turn to Crazy Horse again to bring these new songs to life? Fifty-eight years since he dropped out of high school in Winnipeg, determined to make it

as a professional musician, Young could have gone any way. He could have made another solo record, drafted in a whole new set of musicians or recalled Promise Of The Real, the unit led by Willie Nelson's sons Lukas and Micah, that has served as his other most recent foil, as celebrated in this year's live album *Noise & Flowers*, a document of their 2019 tour.

Yet where, in times gone by, he's often allowed many years to go by between projects with the

**"THE SONGS
JUST CAME
OUT REALLY
QUICKLY"**
NEIL YOUNG



Horse attitudes: at Shangri-La studio in Malibu with (l-r) Nils Lofgren, Billy Talbot and Ralph Molina



"NEIL CUT OFF A PIECE OF HIS FINGER!"

The lost **Rick Rubin** Crazy Horse session – found again!

NEIL Young and Crazy Horse first hooked up with producer Rick Rubin a quarter of a century before they made *World Record* together, back in 1997, when they assembled at the historic Ocean Way studios on Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood for a few days of sessions that have remained locked away ever since.

"I haven't heard the recordings since then," Rubin says. But he remembers some details vividly. "Neil accidentally cut off a piece of his finger a few days before the session, so he couldn't play guitar. I assumed we would cancel the sessions – but Neil had an idea to play harmonica through his guitar amp! I can't remember what it sounded like, but I do know I never heard anything else quite like it before or since."

"Yeah, Neil had an accident with his finger," Billy Talbot remembers. "I don't think he had cut off part of it, though. It was kind of just some irritating injury thing that prevented him from really playing guitar like he likes to."

Young recalls they recorded three songs: "Horseshoe Man", which he later rerecorded for 2000's *Silver And Gold*; a new version of "Hard Luck Stories", originally released on 1986's *Life*; "We did another song, 'Modern World', that's still unreleased," he adds.

Rubin remembers "Horseshoe Man" in particular. "A beautiful piano ballad. I believe we got a good take of that. He later recorded that same song on a subsequent album. At the time I remember thinking the original solo version he cut was a deeper performance. Neil said he listened back recently and liked what we did all those years ago."

Young, who hadn't thought about the session for many years, was prompted to dig out the recording last year, when a fan's email to his website reminded him of its existence. Talbot recalls how pleased Young was when he found the tape again: "Neil came by where I live. He was very excited about the session and played it for me. I thought it was really good, too. It had a warmth and a clarity, the energy was right there in your face. Which is what you want, and we don't always get what we want in this life."

"Yeah," Young adds. "The tracks are good. They were all really good, I really liked them. But it just never turned into anything more back then. Y'know, life was moving pretty fast at the time. So I just put those tracks away. But we kept 'em. They'll probably come out on Volume III, with the 1990s."

JOEY MARTINEZ

Horse, his immediate instinct now was to get back to them, for the third time straight.

"I never thought about it," Young says. "It was natural. Just seemed the right thing to do, the right guys to play with, the right songs for them. Everything just seemed right."

Speaking with Talbot and Lofgren, though, perhaps part of the reason Young seems so eager to keep playing with Crazy Horse in the studio right now is because, in recent years, they haven't had the chance to do it on the road, where things come alive for this band like no other. As time keeps passing, who knows when the chance will come again.

The group's current incarnation first took to the stage on May 1, 2018, at Warnors Theater, in Fresno, California, when Lofgren accompanied Young, Talbot and drummer Ralph Molina on a short string of shows to fill in for the recently retired Frank "Poncho" Sampedro. Poncho had joined the Horse in 1975, stepping in following the death of Danny Whitten, the founder member with whom Young first discovered the near-symbiotic guitar relationship around which the group thrives.

Whitten died in 1972 of an overdose and forever remains the ghost in the band's machine. Arthritis finally forced Sampedro to step down after their 2014 tour. But Lofgren's presence ensures the Horse's battered circle remains unbroken: he first recorded with Young on 1970's *After The Gold Rush*,

before joining Crazy Horse the following year. He appeared on their self-titled Neil-Youngless record, which Lofgren calls "the definitive Danny Whitten album". Although he's been a member of Bruce Springsteen's E Street Band since 1984, Lofgren says, "Neil and Crazy Horse are my oldest musical family."

Ask Young what Lofgren brings to Crazy Horse's makeup, and he lauds his "incredible touch" across multiple instruments. "Nils brings Nils," he explains. "He's a unique individual, a unique musician and he's got a lot of soul. I've known him since he was 17 – so we've got that going for us."

Those 2018 shows prompted Young to begin writing. The following year, the reconfigured Horse went into the studio to make their first album together: *Colorado*. Young even laid plans for a major tour to begin late April 2020. "Neil called and said, 'I wanna go tour all year,'" Lofgren tells me. "I really believed that would be the making of us after *Colorado*: that after 15–25 shows, this was going to be a whole different band, in a whole different place. Because live is where a band really coheres.

I was very excited, looking forward to that happening to us."

Instead, of course, there came only the silence of empty venues and deep anxiety as Covid derailed Young's plans for touring in 2020 – and, so far, ever since. Young has not played publicly since September 2019 and remains deeply wary of ➤



returning to the live arena. As recently as July this year, he cancelled a performance at the annual Farm Aid benefit, writing on his website, “I am not ready for that yet. I don’t think it is safe in the pandemic. I miss it very much.” At the time of writing, there is still nothing on the cards.

Meanwhile, though, Young and Crazy Horse have put out records at a rate like never before. “The pandemic is a big reason things happened the way they have,” says Billy Talbot. “We’ve not been playing live. But consequently, we’ve made three records in a row. That was a good thing to happen out of this chaotic circumstance. A positive thing. We were able to grow from one record to the next, to the next. There’s definitely a chemistry that’s grown between the four of us. On *World Record* a track like ‘Chevrolet’ really shows what it could be if we were playing live.”

Lofgren lights up at the mention of the track. “‘Chevrolet’ felt like a ride of discovery,” he says. “There was just something special about doing it.”

his new songs. The choice of studio was a stroke of serendipity. “I booked Shangri-La because I just thought, ‘Aw, y’know, I’m ready, I’ve got all these songs... where can I record it?’” Young says. “I happened to be in the area of Shangri-La at the time, so I looked into booking the studio. I was very lucky, I was able to get in right away.”

A former ranch house and onetime bordello in the hills overlooking Zuma beach – originally converted to a laidback recording facility by The Band and Bob Dylan in 1974 – Shangri-La is a live-in space. The Horse settled in for the ride, with Lofgren going as far as to move in for the duration. “Usually with Neil in the studio, it’s 10, 12 days,” Lofgren says. “But he’d booked three weeks for this. He said, ‘I need extra time to sort my own thing out, because I’ve really written a record without an instrument: I dunno what to play.’”

They brought a lot of history into the studio with them. “The *After The Gold Rush* upright piano was there,” Lofgren says. “The same one I played when I was 18. The baby grand we used on *Tonight’s The Night*. There was a day, about a week before we were done recording, I realised it was exactly the 53rd anniversary of me meeting Neil and Crazy Horse for the first time, back in 1969.”

Rick Rubin has owned Shangri-La since 2011, but Talbot recalls visiting the place with Young decades before, in its original incarnation. “I don’t think the Horse ever did any recording there... But we’d been there before, a few times, back when The Band lived there in the ’70s. We’d go to visit them.”

The songs’ origins had a direct bearing on the way *World Record* sounds. Before heading into the studio, Young set about preparing rudimentary demos he could email the band, to give them an idea of the tunes. But he found himself facing a problem that was new to him.

“In the original versions there were no chords,” he explains. “It was just me walking through the trees whistling. I don’t usually write without an instrument, so I had to figure it out. It seemed to make more sense to use a keyboard with these melodies, I could figure out the changes. I’d get on the pump organ and sing songs quickly into a file I’d send to the band. Just give ’em a verse and a chorus – not the whole song. I don’t ever like to sing the whole song unless I’m recording. Then I want to try and get it first time.”

Playing live in a circle in a small room at Shangri-La crammed with their instruments, Young explains, “Some songs we’d get in just a couple of takes. Others, it could be up to 17, 18 takes – then it would turn out that we’d probably use one of the first ones.”

On all but three tracks, he abandoned guitar – the first thing most people associate Crazy Horse with – finding himself drawn back to keyboard, particularly the pump organ he’d used for those

“THE
GOLD RUSH
PIANO WAS
THERE”
NILS LOFGREN

JOEY MARTINEZ

WHEN Crazy Horse convened at Rubin’s Shangri-La studio in Malibu in May to begin recording, Young, largely by design, still hadn’t settled on how to approach

“It seemed to make more sense to use a keyboard”: Young recording *World Record*





Out of the ditch, into the dives: with The Ducks backstage at The Catalyst Club in Santa Cruz, 1977

"WE'VE FINISHED A LOT OF STUFF"

Young reveals what the **Archives** might have in store for 2023

AMONG the two dozen or so archive projects Young has confirmed are already "in the can" and ready to be released, some of the most mouthwatering are:

THE DUCKS FLYIN' HIGH

A multi-disc set devoted to the throw-together band with whom Young performed a series of unannounced hit-and-run shows in small, sometimes seedy clubs and bars around Santa Cruz in 1977.

NEIL YOUNG & THE SANTA MONICA FLYERS UNDER THE RAINBOW

A warts-and-all recording of Young and the raggedy outfit known as the Santa Monica Flyers when they brought the *Tonight's The Night* tour to London's Rainbow Theatre in the winter of 1973 (see panel p97 for Nils Lofgren's recollection of that memorable outing).

NEIL YOUNG & CRAZY HORSE EARLY DAZE

A collection gathering unreleased live and studio recordings made by Young and the original Danny Whitten incarnation of the Horse after they first got together in the late 1960s.

NEIL YOUNG & CRAZY HORSE RAGGED GLORY II

In 2018 Young and his Archives team unearthed a set of outtakes from the Horse's towering 1990 LP; 38 minutes of unheard music he describes as "equal to anything on the existing record, maybe better". He has assembled them for a new, double edition of the album.



NEIL YOUNG ARCHIVES VOLUME III: 1976-1987

The next instalment in Young's chronological series of gargantuan boxsets is ready to go... sort of. As he explains: "Volume III, yeah, I've finished laying it out. But it's been so long since I finished laying it out that when it comes to checking it out it's almost like seeing it for the first time... so I'll probably make a few more changes there, because I'll have had a fresh look at it."

Of the titles mentioned, Young says, "Probably The Ducks is gonna be out. We finished that. We've finished *Under The Rainbow*. And... y'know, we've finished a lot of stuff which we had hoped would have come out by now. But because of hold-ups in vinyl production and quality problems, we haven't been able to get things out the way that we would like to. We got a little behind the schedule. But, it's like, I do it all the time. I've got all of these recordings and I just methodically go about it and feel out which ones are the ones that I want to do, which ones I want to finish, which ones are good enough. And which ones aren't."

initial demos, taking the lead with his rhythm playing. The Horse took it in their stride. "As always," Talbot says, "we lock into the groove. That's very important."

"Man," Lofgren enthuses, "he was playing some really funky, nasty pump organ there, like on 'The Wonder Won't Wait' and 'The World Is In Trouble Now'."

Spontaneity was the guiding rule. "A lot of it became Neil and I jumping around different instruments, because we weren't sure who was going to play what," Lofgren says.

Young took up additional percussion duties on several tracks, providing the blunt, crunching crash of the improvised instrument he dubbed "kick tub".

"That was something I just thought of as we were getting ready to record," Young explains. "I said, 'Let's just get a big, huge, metal tub.' Y'know, like a water tub. Something you'd feed animals from. We got it, and I didn't even know what I was gonna do with it, whether I was gonna hit it with a stick or what. But, as we went along, it kind of showed up. If I felt something needed a big drum hit, and it wasn't there, I kicked the tub. I'd kick it, and it would bounce off the wall, so that's why it's got such a big rattly sound. I like it a lot."

"Neil was experimenting a lot," Lofgren says. "It was a beautiful trip. We got frustrated once in a while, but it was like a treasure hunt. Just go at it every day, keep fishing."

"We weren't in a hurry," Young says. "But we kept coming in every day and doing it. It was fun every day, everything was very spontaneous. The record sounds like its own thing. The instrumentation is different, the beats are different, the melodies are different, the cadence is different, it's not the normal grooves. I loved that. I mean – that's a gift to have that. It wasn't work, in any respect. This record was a gift. There's no way to explain these things, really. The best thing to do is just try to record them and keep moving."

Even the idea of collaborating with Rubin as producer was initially unplanned. "When I booked Shangri-La, I hadn't thought of Rick at all," Young says. "Then, down the road a little bit, I thought, 'Y'know, it might be really easy to work with Rick.' We've never been able to make the

record we always talked about making. So I called him up: 'Listen, uh, do you wanna make a record? I've already booked Shangri-La.' He said, 'Yeah – I know you booked it!'"

Rubin had his first experience of recording Young and Crazy Horse back in 1997, a session that remains unreleased [see panel, p93]. Of the weeks Crazy Horse spent at Shangri-La working on *World Record*, he says, "The sessions were consistently some of the most unusual and surprising I've witnessed. The entire process of recon was unusual and mystical. I don't know anyone else who works like Neil."

For his part, meanwhile, Young found working with Rubin did remind him of someone else. "Working with Rick was super easy for me – a lot like it was working with David Briggs," he says, referring to the fallen comrade who died in 1995, and who was his most trusted co-producer from his first solo album in 1968 through to 1994's *Sleeps With Angels*, helping capture Young at his rawest on a handful of career-defining records. "Rick's got the spirit," Young says.

"I know what Neil means," Talbot says. "Rick wasn't really pushing us for this or for that – he was just really in the flow of it. He wasn't telling us what to go for. He was trying to help us accomplish what he could see we were going for. That's what David did, a lot, back in the day."

"David would take care of the technical stuff, but it was mainly: 'Hey, trust yourselves. Just go sing and play,'" continues Lofgren. "With Rick, I think the burden of production was lifted off Neil's shoulders somewhat, so Neil showed up a load of times like he was just enjoying being a singer and a guitar player."

While, for the bulk of *World Record*, Young chose not to play guitar, when he did plug in Old Black, his battle-tested 1953 Les Paul, it resulted in "Chevrolet" – the album's most epic track.

At first glance, it seems simply a song about, as Young says, "the feeling of seeing an old car, and getting a lot of vibes from it". But as it goes on, the picture blurs and splinters into a memory of roads taken, mistakes made, lessons learned. ➤



Young and Crazy Horse filmed by Daryl Hannah recording Barn, their 14th album together, Colorado, 2021

"It's based on different kinds of Chevrolets, on different kinds of highways, in different parts of my life," Young says. "I don't really know how to describe it. Each verse is a different car, a different time of my life. I don't know whether I was talking about last week, or about 40 years ago."

Young's vocal is simple, plaintive. His guitar sounds like it's about to catch fire as he pushes it searching after a half-remembered, folk-tinged melody. Around him, Crazy Horse jam a melting wall of sound that eventually bleeds out for 15 minutes.

"We played in a big circle," Young recalls of the session. "I was facing Ralph, Billy was to my left, Nils was to my right, and, yeah, we just, y'know, played and sang. Very simple."

"I put on my black Falcon, turned way up, and we went on this long ride," adds Lofgren. "I was leaning in, just reacting to Neil. Again, we've not had 70 shows under our belt together, but this is the third album together in a row now. So I'm like, 'Hell with it, I need to turn up and be a little more reckless.'"

"Chevrolet' allows the Horse to really gallop," Talbot says. "If you're galloping on a horse, you're going up the hill, then down the hill, and around the hill. That's how the Horse does it with Neil."

**"HE PICKS UP
ON WHEN THE
ENERGY'S
THERE AGAIN"**
BILLY TALBOT

The track is a kind of testament, a perfect example of the unique thing that happens – that still happens – between Neil Young and Crazy Horse when they lock into it.

"It always sounds like it's on the verge of falling off a cliff," is how Rick Rubin explains it, after witnessing it happening up close. "It gets very exciting in the room. They seem to egg each other on to new heights and depths."

"It's all about the groove," Young says. "If we're relaxed, and if everybody is in the groove... that's The Horse."

YOUNG agrees that something transpires between him and Crazy Horse that he doesn't find in any other situation, that he still gets surprised by it, even if he can't put a name to it. "I dunno what to call it." He laughs. "But, yeah, it definitely happens. It happens over and over again with Crazy Horse. We appreciate it like it's the first time, every time."

Is it because the Horse is firmly on his mind again that he finally turned back

to their lost 2000 album *Toast* this year? "I dunno really what it was. Putting it out this year just seemed like the right time."

What is clear, however, is that when he revisited *Toast*, Young was astonished by what he found there. "It must be said," he wrote on his website to mark the release, "that here Crazy Horse shows a depth never seen or heard before. This is a pinnacle. Where they let me go, where they took me, was unbelievable."

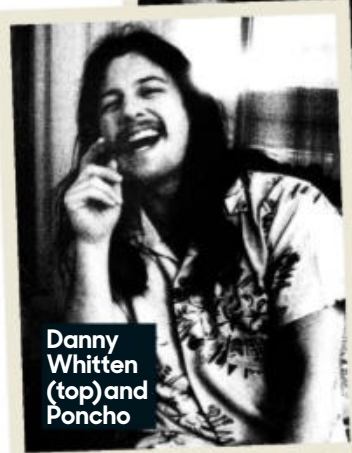
It was that very depth of feeling, though, that kept him from letting anyone hear the record for over two decades. *Toast* was named after the studio in which it was recorded, a noticeably rundown facility in San Francisco. He was drawn to the place because one of his heroes, John Coltrane, cut some sides there. But its dilapidated state also matched Young's psychic condition while he worked. As he wrote in his memoir *Special Deluxe*, there were "some serious

problems with my marriage" to his then-wife Pegi, a sad, unsettled vibration that fed into the songs, most of which he composed on the spot.

"*Toast* is about a relationship," Young wrote on his website. "There is a time in many relationships that go bad, a time long before the breakup, where it dawns on one of the people, maybe both, that it's over. This was that time."



"I knew it was a special record," Young says today, when asked why he didn't release *Toast* back then. "I had immersed myself in it. But my life was very turbulent and I didn't really want to get into that. I just didn't feel like putting it out – it just wasn't right for that time, for me. You know, in those days, we'd go on the road and play every record, we'd go out and do that whole thing, and I knew I just didn't really want to do that with that record. I just didn't want to think about it. So I just kept moving, and I didn't put it out."



Danny Whitten (top) and Poncho

How did it feel to finally let it out?

"It felt good to get it out there," Young says. "I have enough distance between me and it so that nothing about it was getting to me emotionally and bothering me. It felt good to hear how people felt it. They heard the same thing in it that I heard."

It's not the first time Young has felt too emotionally close to a record to let it out into the world. In 1975, similar feelings prevented him from releasing *Homegrown*, an album that in part reflected the breakdown of his relationship with Carrie Snodgrass. "It was too personal," Young told *Rolling Stone* magazine about the record in 1975. "It scared me." He only finally issued *Homegrown* in 2020.

Billy Talbot says he understands now why Young didn't release *Toast* at the time.

"Back then I wasn't really paying attention to it, but I know Neil was going through personal changes in his life, and it reflected in the music. But the rest of us didn't think of that. We were just going for it, not asking questions."

Still, Talbot reckons the decision to shelve the record had an unforeseen cooling effect on Young and Crazy Horse back then, following the strong run of albums they had created across the 1990s – *Ragged Glory*, *Sleeps With Angels* and *Broken Arrow*.

"When *Toast* didn't come out, I was disappointed," Talbot reflects. "I took it like a gust of wind. It had a lot to do with the whole Neil Young and Crazy Horse spectrum. Because, before that, it really felt like we had built to [*Toast*] – then when it didn't come out, we weren't able to continue to build off of that. So we had to find ourselves again. In time we did find ourselves again. But it put a stop to things: we pressed a little too hard on the brakes. It had its consequences that lasted for a couple of years."

Tellingly, Young's longest break from recording with Crazy Horse came soon after, a nine-year gap between 2003's *Greendale* and *Americana* in 2012.

"But, y'know, we've been doing it for a long time," Talbot continues. "When you do it for a long time you have time to recover, to change, to grow, and that's what keeps happening, fortunately, with Neil. He recognises those things and he's not impatient. He picks up on when the energy's there again – 'Let's do it!' He always came back to Crazy Horse."

The Horse abides. But is it the same Horse? Is the Crazy Horse that recorded *Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere* in 1969, the Horse that cut *Toast* in

2000, and the Horse that made *World Record* in 2022 all one? Is there something there that never changes?

"Well, the players are always consistent," Young says as though the answer were self-evident, which perhaps it is. "Drums. Bass. Me. That's always there, every Crazy Horse record. The only thing that has changed is the guitar player/multi-instrumentalist that's played with us. That's just been the way things have worked out. We had Danny Whitten, we had Poncho for years – and Poncho was great – and we

have Nils. It's just the way things evolve. Billy and Ralph and I, we'll just keep on going. We just love playing. It always feels natural. It's their lives, it's my life, that's what we do."

Talbot considers the same question in reverse: is working with Neil Young now much the same as it was in 1969. Has anything changed?

"Well, I think we've all... relaxed a lot more through the years." He laughs. "Which is a big thing, believe or not."

HEARING the band talk about making *World Record* and then watching the documentary accompanying the 50th-anniversary edition of *Harvest*, it's easy to believe not much has changed when it comes to working with Young – even if one of his most consistent traits seems to be how changeable he can be. Shot in 1971, the *Harvest Time* film catches Young at a period when, after years of hard work, everything had come together, bringing him enormous creative liberty. The success of 1970's *After The Gold Rush* had made him a radio mainstay and a figurehead for a generation looking for a voice, a position *Harvest*'s plaintive acoustic reveries seemed set to consolidate.

Just a few years later, though, he cast the album as a trap, famously writing that it "put me in the ➤

"THEY WERE THROWING STUFF AT US!"

Nils Lofgren remembers taking the Tonight's The Night Tour to the UK in 1973, soon to be immortalised on the upcoming Official Bootleg Series release, *Under The Rainbow*

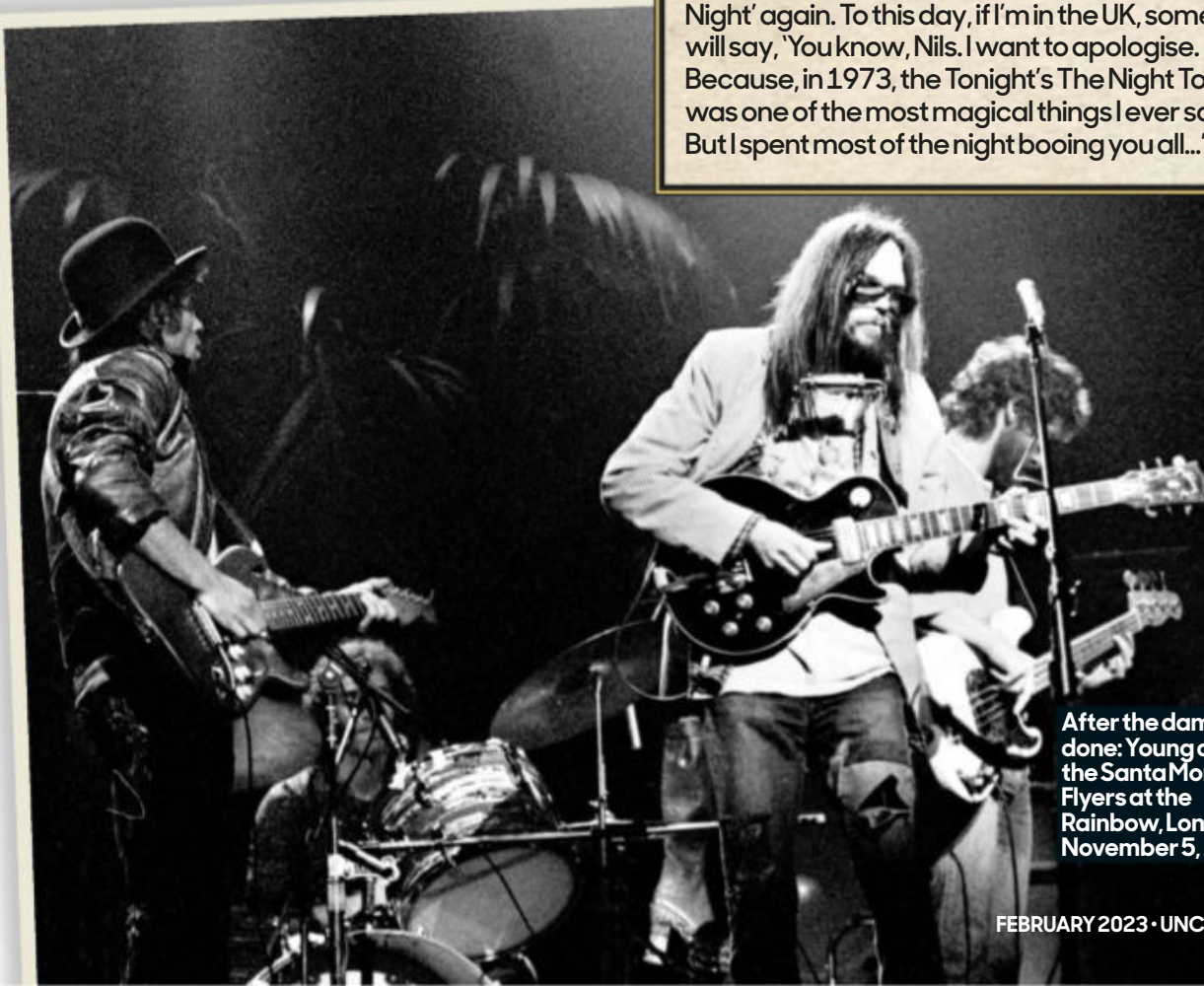


"TONIGHT'S *The Night* was us working through the deaths of our friends, Danny Whitten and Bruce Berry, both gone from drugs. It was kind of a concept album, and kind of a wake album. It didn't take all the pain away. But it was a journey that helped get through a lot of it.

"When it came out, Neil took it on the road. We went to the UK, we did the Rainbow Club in London. He stuck to his guns and just played the album. The audiences were yelling for his hits – they were throwing stuff at us. We had 16-inch glitter boots tacked to the piano and we had a palm-tree roadie with a light bulb on a palm tree. Neil was doing a lot of rapping – just pounding the piano, talking about Bruce Berry putting it in his arm. Just really going overboard with letting the rage, the hurt and the whatever else out. I'd jump up on the piano, with my combat boots on, Neil would just be slamming at the keys, yelling into the mic, the band would be going at it – and the audience was like, 'What. The. Hell's. Going. On?' Just this raw emotion that was, again, very cathartic, working through the frustration of it all.

"We'd play the album through. One of my favourite moments – because the album starts and ends with 'Tonight's The Night' – was by the end of the night, when people would be yelling, for 'Old Man', 'Down By The River'... 'Come on, Neil! Neil would come out, finally, come up to the mic, and say, 'Y'know what? We're gonna play something you've all heard before.'

"The place would erupt, people were shouting, 'Oh, thank God.' Everybody had their own particular favourite in mind that he was going to play... and we'd play 'Tonight's The Night' again. To this day, if I'm in the UK, someone will say, 'You know, Nils. I want to apologise. Because, in 1973, the Tonight's The Night Tour was one of the most magical things I ever saw. But I spent most of the night booing you all...'"



After the damage done: Young and the Santa Monica Flyers at the Rainbow, London, November 5, 1973

GLISBERT HANEKROOT/REDFERNS; GEMIS/REDFERNS

Early-'70s Neil: "I think *Harvest* is a great album from that period"



A man needs a barn: recording *Harvest* with the Stray Gators – (l-r) Tim Drummond, Jack Nitzsche, Young, Kenny Buttrey, Ben Keith – Sept 1971



middle of the road. Travelling there soon became a bore, so I headed for the ditch. A rougher ride, but I saw more interesting people..."

Reflecting a darkening period in America that coincided with Danny Whitten's death, the "ditch trilogy" albums Young threw himself into making next would be rawer, starker, stranger, sadder, more penetrating, commencing with perhaps the greatest, *Tonight's The Night*, a record Lofgren calls "a kind of a wake".

In retrospect, *Harvest* resembles the last sunset of a summer idyll before a wild and murky storm season descended. It remains Young's biggest-selling album – the one that people who don't buy Neil Young albums are most likely to own. This is a fact that he has learned to put up with, rather than particularly celebrate.

"Well, y'know, I think *Harvest* is a great album from that period," Young allows today. "But I don't feel like it's noticeably better than any of the other ones."

There's a moment in the documentary when Young is lying in a field on his property, listening to the playback coming out from the barn where he and the band have just finished recording. The cameraman asks if the music is what he was after. "I don't know what I want," the young Young says. "I don't know it 'til I hear it."

Fifty years on, is that still the case when he's recording today? "Pretty much, yeah," Young says. "I don't want to think about it before I do it. I just want to do it. Just feel the song, sing the song, record while we're doing it. Always record. Don't wait. Don't run it down and then record it. That's bullshit. I mean: just do it. The first time is probably gonna be the best. After that, they're all repeating something you've done before. So, y'know, the idea is to get the essence of it, and to be ready to record it and be ready to play it. And, if you're really into it, that's all you need."

"That's all I need, anyway. Some other people make records different ways. But that doesn't have anything to do with me. I just like doing what I do."

NEIL Young is out there somewhere, on a bus in Canada, considering the past. Specifically, the picture of his father he's used as *World Record*'s cover.

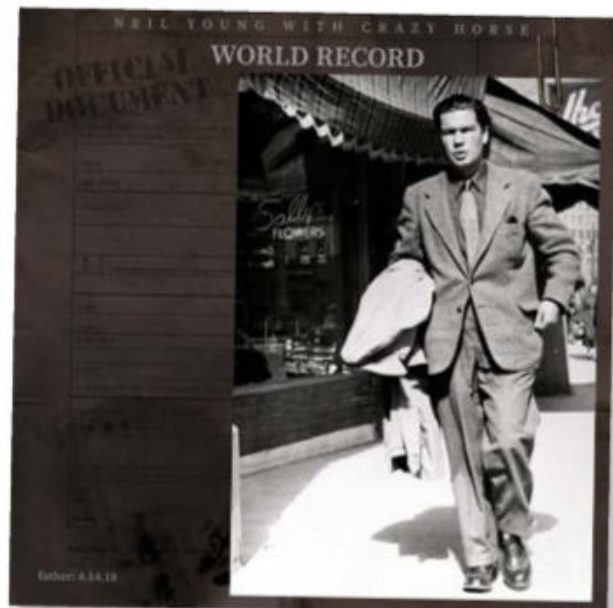
"It's a wonderful photograph," Young acknowledges. "It makes me feel so good. You see that and you really get a vibe from it. It's like that's the genesis of whatever it is that the *World Record* is about. It's about a family, about experiences, about life."

Inside the sleeve come other pictures. Neil's brother, Bob; Neil himself with his mother, Rassy – the first family unit he ever knew, before his parents split when he was 12. It seems a curiously fitting set of images to accompany the record he's now made with his oldest musical family.

Young and Crazy Horse share a lot of history. Their future is an open question. Whether

Young will ever decide the situation is right for him to play live again remains to be seen.

Billy Talbot remains hopeful, but pragmatic. "Nils is going to go out playing with Bruce now, so we're not going to be able to do anything live for at least a year-and-a-half with Nils," he says. "We'll see what happens. We'd like to make our mark that way before too long passes us by. But these are the



**"ALWAYS
RECORD.
DON'T WAIT...
JUST DO IT"**
NEIL YOUNG

circumstances of reality. We're getting older. It's not so easy to go back on the road and play every night, that's for sure." He smiles: "But maybe we could play every other night. We may never play live again, though. We'll see. We shall see."

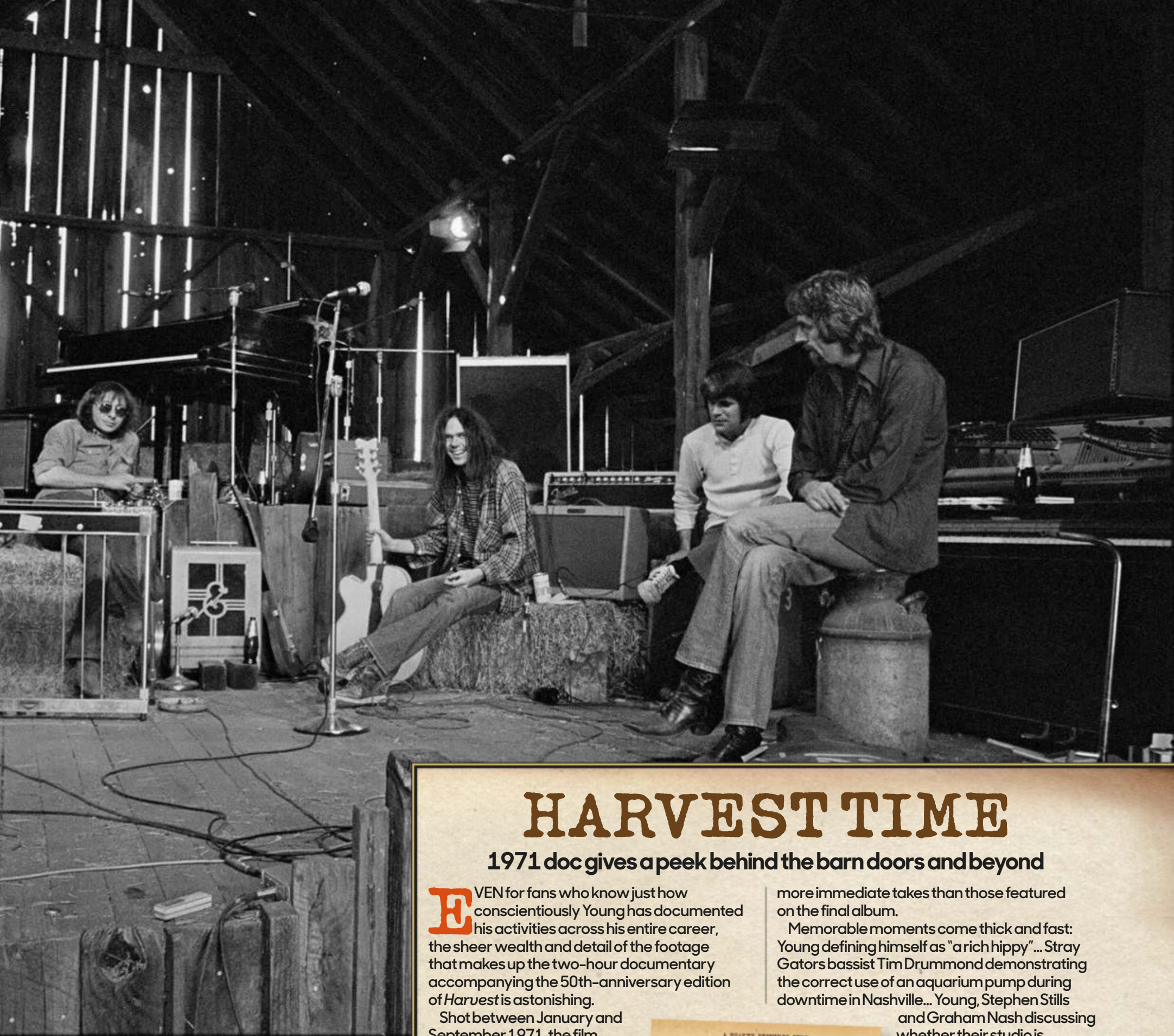
Shall we see another Crazy Horse album, though? Are there any seeds in the wind?

Talbot smiles again. "There are... some. Y'know, it's getting to be winter. We had a little snow here yesterday for the first time. But I think, come this spring, we'll see what happens. What is it they say? 'Hope springs eternal,' yeah. Well, spring brings hope, eternally."

For the moment Young finds himself unusually content with the record he's just released. "I like *World Record* really a lot. I love it," he says. "It was a very good record to me. The thing is: I still can listen to it."

Is that so rare? "That is very unlike any other records I've made," he says. "Usually after I've made them, I don't want to hear them any more."

Young turned 77 the week he released *World Record* – his wife, Daryl Hannah, threw him a birthday party where the guests included old



HARVEST TIME

1971 doc gives a peek behind the barn doors and beyond

EVEN for fans who know just how conscientiously Young has documented his activities across his entire career, the sheer wealth and detail of the footage that makes up the two-hour documentary accompanying the 50th-anniversary edition of *Harvest* is astonishing.

Shot between January and September 1971, the film captures every aspect of the recording of the album in close-up: following Young and his ragtag family of cohorts from the famous sessions conducted in the barn at his bucolic Broken Arrow ranch in Northern California, across the ocean to a grey London for his collaboration with the London Symphony Orchestra, musicians separated by a common language as they attempt to capture "A Man Needs A Maid". Finally, it lurches back to Nashville, for further tracking and overdubbing sessions amid a cast of Music City eccentrics.

Steering clear of voiceover narration, the film is an immersive, fly-on-the-wall experience – particularly in the barn session sequences. The footage sits the audience right on the plaid-shirted shoulders of the Stray Gators band Young and co-producer Elliot Mazer assembled for the record as they work up tracks like "Alabama," "Words" and "Are You Ready For The Country" – caught here in rawer,

more immediate takes than those featured on the final album.

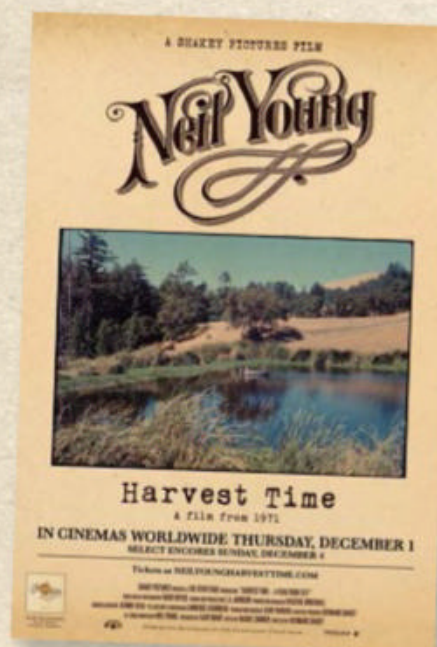
Memorable moments come thick and fast: Young defining himself as "a rich hippy"... Stray Gators bassist Tim Drummond demonstrating the correct use of an aquarium pump during downtime in Nashville... Young, Stephen Stills

and Graham Nash discussing whether their studio is haunted while attempting to nail harmonies on "Words"... glimpses of Young and his then partner Carrie Snodgrass huddling together on the sidelines any chance they get, the 1970s sunlight flaring around them.

Watching the film is a poignant experience for Young. "Seeing all those guys," he says today, referring to the Stray Gators, "none of them are alive. So, y'know, that's a trip. I'm looking at them and I'm the only one left. There's a great jam in there, somewhere in the middle of the *Harvest* barn. It's very cool hearing that. Very funky and

spontaneous. I like things like that. I like the idea of getting this film out and having people see the real story – and the fact that I made the film, instead of someone else doing it."

The Harvest Time film features as part of the *Harvest* 50th-anniversary boxset, alongside the original album, three studio outtakes on CD/7" vinyl, a book of liner notes, and another DVD of Young's live 1971 solo performance for BBC TV



friends Joni Mitchell and Stephen Stills. Meanwhile, he presses on at pace, working on his archives, with a slew of projects set to go, and more lined up. "I built the Archives so that it enables me to deal with things, so that when I'm finished dealing with them, they have a place to live and flourish," he says. "I feel good about all of that. I just keep on going, making my way through it. I don't like the idea of a bunch of stuff being left over that, if something happens to me, somebody else comes along and puts together all that stuff. I don't like those kinds of projects."

He continues, as his bus rolls on: "Y'know, I'm going by a sign on the road right here, that says HAVE YOU SECURED YOUR LOAD CORRECTLY? So, I think that I'm trying to secure my load correctly. Just make it so that everybody can hear it. It's all in order, the best of what it is, presented the best way it can be."

Long may your load be correctly secured, Neil. "Well, we're coming up on a curve here. But I think the load's looking good." 🎧

World Record is available now from Reprise

LIVE

CAT POWER SINGS DYLAN

Royal Albert Hall, London, November 5

How does it feel? Chan Marshall summons the spirit of '66 for this reverent track-by-track tribute

JUST as Bob Dylan steps on stage at Bournemouth International Centre for the final date of his ecstatically received UK run, Chan Marshall begins her ballsy reconstruction of his fabled 1966 Royal Albert Hall concert. You might wonder exactly which Albert Hall show is being recalled. Is it the infamous “Judas” gig, billed as *The Royal Albert Hall Concert* on the widely circulated bootleg LP but actually taped at Manchester Free Trade Hall? Is it the May 26 show, released in 2016 as *The Real Royal Albert Hall 1966 Concert*? Or is it the following, still more combative night, when a fan howled, “Drop dead, Dylan!”, after which he ceased touring for eight years?

The way Marshall talked in a recent interview, it’s all of them: the hinge moment when folk purity was blasted into the electric future by an acid-stoked, stubborn 25-year-old kid, facing down such violent resistance that he would be forever fireproofed to follow his own path, to the point where he’s still bucking touring convention aged 81, resolutely ignoring the beloved old songs that Cat Power sings for him instead.

Marshall’s motives go deeper than mere ventriloquism. Her three covers albums are career landmarks, prone to mesmeric

deconstruction, as with her famously slothful “Satisfaction” vocal. And on 2008’s *Jukebox*, right after a Stonesy take on Dylan’s “I Believe In You”, she sings her own “Song To Bobby”, another link in the chain from Bob’s “Song To Woody” tribute. It recounts all the times he’s touched her life until, finally meeting him backstage in Paris, she aches to ask: “*Can you please be my man?*”

As such, tonight she is unusually faithful, forswearing her usual radical reshaping. Dylan’s one-man acoustic set is tackled alongside guitarist Henry Munson and a third musician on harmonica. This leaves Marshall, dressed in a dark trouser-suit with her left hand jammed in her pocket and her right hand beating out the rhythm, to focus on the verbal torrents unfurling on a wholly forgivable autocue. There’s a languid drag to her words, different to Dylan’s narcotic, hypnotically intense drawl back then, instead working with Munson’s soft strums to draw you in. Swaying back and forth at the mic, she seems to be willing herself to be casual, in a gig whose prospect naturally terrified her.

One true gift of the show is that all these extraordinary, beautiful songs are heard together for the first time in 56 years. Every line of “Visions Of Johanna” still sparks with acid flashes and deep bohemian



SETLIST

- 1 She Belongs To Me
- 2 4th Time Around
- 3 Visions Of Johanna
- 4 It's All Over Now, Baby Blue
- 5 Desolation Row
- 6 Just Like A Woman
- 7 Mr Tambourine Man
- 8 Tell Me, Momma
- 9 I Don't Believe You (She Acts Like We Never Have Met)
- 10 Baby, Let Me Follow You Down
- 11 Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues
- 12 Leopard-Skin Pillbox Hat
- 13 One Too Many Mornings
- 14 Ballad Of A Thin Man
- 15 Like A Rolling Stone

romance. Marshall fervently pulls at the phrasing, finding the erotic currents of this surreal New York love song: “*Just Lou-i-ise, and her lover/So entwined*”. It’s received in silence by a crowd either reverent or perhaps unsure how to process this unusual offering, caught between a Cat Power and a Dylan gig, between then and now. It’s only after “It’s All Over Now, Baby Blue”, when Marshall toasts us with a glass of water, that the real cheers start.

“Desolation Row” is the acoustic set’s greatest test. Marshall fully inhabits its gallery of trapped grotesques, hissing abuse at Romeo’s exit, and adoring Cinderella’s “*Bette Davis style*”. The song is in part a grimly convincing portrait of creeping American fascism, right from its first line of lynching postcards and brown passports, still tragically timely as Marshall mournfully sings, “*The Titanic sails at dawn... and everybody*





Marshall fully inhabits “Desolation Row”’s gallery of trapped grotesques

shouts, which side are you on?”

These mid-’60s songs are also among Dylan’s most intimate considerations of women – youthful and sometimes cruel tales, told with an intensity he now tends to reserve for death. Marshall imparts feminine energy and empathy to the women in “She Belongs To Me”, “4th Time Around” and especially “Just Like A Woman”, clutching at her throat when she sings of *“this pain in here”*. She disarms the lyrics’ occasional inclinations to misogyny, instead relishing their prismatic portraits and romantic fervour.

There’s barely a pause between the acoustic “Mr Tambourine Man” and the band expanding to an electric seven-piece for “Tell Me Momma”, which Marshall sings with a punk snarl, over a whomp approximating

that of Dylan’s ’66 drummer Mickey Jones. She’s cutting and sardonic on “Baby, Let Me Follow You Down”, as the organist shoots silvery bolts at the ceiling in a decent stab at early Garth Hudson. Marshall dances on her highish heels during “Leopard-Skin Pillbox Hat” as a guitar gives a strangled scream. “This is fun!” she decides.

“Judas!” shouts someone with tiresome and premature inevitability before “Ballad Of A Thin Man”. “Jesus,” Marshall responds simply. The thing which can’t be conjured of course, even if she wanted to, is the context that made Dylan’s 1966 gigs like warfare, and the moments leading into the revenging roar of Manchester’s “Like A Rolling Stone” so potent. All she can do is sing the songs. “How does it feel”, she



“Thank you, Bob”: Chan Marshall and band take a bow

wonders on “Ballad Of A Thin Man”, *“to be such a freak?”* As she finally reaches “Like A Rolling Stone”, Marshall’s hair is tousled with her exertions, her hands seeming to cut a deck of cards as she asks, *“Do you want to make a deal?”* The band meanwhile do their very best,

though they impersonate the vintage mercury sound more than renewing or remaking it.

“Thank you so much, I love you,” Marshall says at the end. “Thank you, Bob.” That last phrase is tonight’s most enduring, endearing message. **NICK HASTED**

KENDRICK LAMAR

O2 Arena, London,
November 8

The 21st century's
greatest rapper
channels Bowie in
stark arena show

THE lights dim and, after support sets from Tanna Leone and Baby Keem, the audience at the madly cavernous O2 is at fever pitch. It's a wonderfully diverse crowd: teenage

white kids moshing; older black guys nodding, ready to follow the intricate flow word-for-word; women decked out in their finery, dancing ecstatically. The screen to the side of the stage lights up to reveal... an ad for a mobile payment app, with Kendrick Lamar sagely relating business advice from old white billionaire hedge fund manager Ray Dallio. "Slow money wins the race," he nods. "Invest in yourself..."

It's not the last time tonight in a triumphant, beautifully conceived and above all immensely controlled show that Lamar defies expectations. There's none of the bloodshed or glittering crown of thorns of his sensational Glastonbury set, but in its own way this is an immaculately staged performance. He's dressed all in black in front of a white muslin cube that acts as a screen for surreal, chiaroscuro back projections, and supported by a troupe of male and female dancers in monochrome uniforms. The effect is like nothing so much as Bowie's 1976 Isolar tour, where the Thin White Duke strode out onto

a starkly expressionist stage. Tonight, Lamar is at similarly peak performance, an artist in imperial mode.

Which isn't to say that the show is perfect. Following a stunning rise over the past decade on the back of three instant-classic albums, this year's *Mr Morale & The Big Steppers* may be Lamar's first real stumble, so tied up in confessional self-examination that it struggles to resonate. The Big Steppers show is presented as a therapy session, but in place of the album's self-help advice from Eckhart Tolle, instead we have the playful, teasing, seductive voice of Dame Helen Mirren booming out across the auditorium between songs. After a huge "Rich Spirit", transformed from the record's meditative confessional into an irresistible singalong, she chastises him: "Once again you let your ego get the best of you, Mr Morale". The effect is like a stadium version of *The Sopranos* – the gangsta's paradise performed, then psychoanalysed and deconstructed.

The set sidesteps the knottier, most troubled moments of the record – there's no "Auntie Diaries" or "Mother I Sober"

– in favour of supercharging tracks like "N95" and "Count Me Out" to stadium size. And there's a rousingly received run through back-catalogue bangers like "Bitch Don't Kill My Vibe" and the stunning "Money Trees", from the breakthrough *Good Kid, m.A.A.d City*, in celebration of its 10th anniversary. But frustratingly there's only a couple of verses from his genre-defying masterpiece, *To Pimp A Butterfly*.

Not that the ecstatic audience, chanting Lamar's name awkwardly but heartily to the tune of "Seven Nation Army", seem to mind. Tonight he's received as a conquering hero. But something about the victory feels a little too easy, the black-and-white big screen stadium staging too stark to allow for the shadows, subtleties and vulnerabilities of his most profound work. At Glastonbury he proved he could provoke as well as entertain on the very biggest stages. Here – perhaps understandably – he steps back from laying out the real blood on the tracks, content to reign as the undisputed world champion of 21st-century hip-hop. **U**

STEPHEN TROUSSÉ

SETLIST

- 1 United In Grief
- 2 N95
- 3 Element
- 4 Worldwide Steppers
- 5 Backseat Freestyle
- 6 Rich Spirit
- 7 Humble
- 8 Father Time
- 9 m.A.A.d city
- 10 Purple Hearts
- 11 King Kunta
- 12 Loyalty/ Swimming Pools (Drank)
- 13 Bitch, Don't Kill My Vibe
- 14 Die Hard
- 15 Lust/DNA
- 16 Count Me Out
- 17 Money Trees
- 18 Love
- 19 Alright
- 20 Mirror
- 21 Silent Hill
- 22 Vent/Range Brothers
- 23 Family Ties
- 24 Crown
- 25 Mr Morale
- 26 Saviour



Puppet love: Lamar in imperial mode in London

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FILMS

A follow-up to *Knives Out* paints with broad strokes; Fassbinder remade; and teen black comedy from Spain

GLASSONION Released in the winter of 2019, *Knives Out* already feels like one of the key texts of the Trump era – a deliciously confected grown-up entertainment, of the kind you thought Hollywood had forgotten how to make, that unerringly skewered the paranoid vanities of affluent white America.

The wit of its construction, the verve of its performances – in particular Daniel Craig as Kentucky-fried gentleman sleuth Benoit Blanc – and the popular nerve that it touched meant that a sequel and even a franchise felt inevitable, and *Glass Onion*, “a *Knives Out* mystery”, once again couldn’t be better timed. As Elon Musk fritters billions demolishing social media empires, the new film takes us to the luxury Aegean Covid bubble of a vainglorious tech tycoon and the motley crew of self-styled “disrupters” invited to his birthday murder mystery party that goes horribly awry.

It’s another delightful cast – Edward Norton as the would-be mastermind, Kate Hudson as a disgracefully ageing supermodel, Dave Bautista as a coddled men’s-rights YouTuber and Janelle Monáe as Norton’s ex-business partner. It has a dementedly contrived plot, owing something to Benoit Blanc’s great grandpappy, C Auguste Dupin and the mystery of *The Purloined Letter*. And every detail – from Blanc’s dapper ascots to the drinks menu and décor at Norton’s island paradise – is observed with impeccable mischief.

So it feels churlish to find fault – especially in a film that self-consciously sells itself as a shiny bauble. But like the franchise that Craig recently exited, *Glass Onion* too often feels like fan service, a series of set pieces and cute references designed to delight fans of *Knives Out*, rather than a story with its own stakes and jeopardy. The satire that was so insidious in the first film is here a little



Media critique:
Jessica Henwick,
Daniel Craig and
Janelle Monáe in
Glass Onion

Glass Onion is the most fun you’re likely to have with a film this holiday season

too on the nose, settling for easy caricatures rather than implicating a wider audience. Make no mistake, *Glass Onion* is once again the most fun you are likely to have with a film this holiday season. But Johnson is surely too talented a director to settle down to a franchise, even when the formula is this fabulous.

CORSAGE “Look at me,” demands Vicky Krieps, playing Empress Elisabeth of Austria in *Corsage*, to her husband the Emperor in a fleeting moment of intimacy. “Don’t ever stop looking at me.” In truth it’s hard to take your eyes off her. Following *Phantom Thread*, *Das Boot* and *Bergman Island*, this is another sensational performance from Krieps as the Hapsburg monarch turning 40 in 1878, straining against yet perversely relishing the rigid constraints of her time and place, gallivanting around Europe, and riding, fencing, shooting up and flirting magnificently with a succession of rakish yet tragically inappropriate gentlemen.

A kind of older sibling to Sofia Coppola’s *Marie Antoinette*, it similarly plays fast and loose with the historical record, has an impeccable soundtrack (courtesy of Camille), complemented by some archly anachronistic

REVIEWED THIS MONTH



GLASS ONION
Directed by Rian Johnson
Starring Daniel Craig, Edward Norton, Kate Hudson
Opened November 23
Cert 12a
8/10



CORSAGE
Directed by Marie Kreutzer
Starring Vicky Krieps, Colin Morgan, Ivana Urban
Opens December 26
Cert 12a
8/10



PETER VON KANT
Directed by François Ozon
Starring Denis Ménochet, Isabelle Adjani, Khalil Ben Gharbia
Opens December 30
Cert 15
7/10



PIGGY
Directed by Carlotta Pereda
Starring Laura Galán, Richard Holmes, Carmen Machi
Opens January 6
Cert 18
8/10



ALCARRÀS
Directed by Carla Simón
Starring Jordi Pujol Dolcet, Anna Otín, Xènia Roset
Opens January 6
Cert 15
6/10



tunes (“Help Me Make It Through The Night”, “As Tears Go By”) and features some spectacular costume design. It’s clearly something of a passion project for director Marie Kreutzer and her largely female crew and, like Pablo Larrain’s *Spencer*, it doubtless goes too far in striving to present a cosseted aristocrat as a proto-feminist martyr. But such is Krieps’ charismatic commitment you’re willing to follow her all the way to her final leap out of history and into myth.

PETER VON KANT Rainer Werner Fassbinder’s career was a roiling, furious, insanely productive hot mess that crossed the borders of life, theatre and film, refashioning his obsessions and casting his ex-lovers. His 1972 melodrama, *The Bitter Tears Of Petra Von Kant*, is shaping up to



Vicky Krieps in *Corsage*

be his most influential work, feeding into Olivier Assayas’ *Clouds Of Sils Maria*, Peter Strickland’s *Duke Of Burgundy* and now François Ozon’s curious meta-adaptation.

In the original film, itself adapted from his own play, Fassbinder transformed his romantic torment into the story of a lesbian fashion designer, ruinously obsessed with a younger woman. Ozon is remarkably faithful to scenes and long stretches of Fassbinder’s dialogue, but translates it all into the story of a strangely familiar burly film director in a fabulously appointed apartment in Cologne, who falls under the spell of a beautiful young Arabic man. Turning Fassbinder’s film à clef inside out to form a portrait of the artist as a young lech is an interesting formal exercise – and thanks to Denis Ménochet’s incredible performance *Peter Von Kant* is eminently watchable. But like Stefan Crepon’s feline houseboy, making tea and silently padding around the fringes of the drama, Ozon feels curiously detached from the lurid re-enactment, like a scientist patiently observing the results of a painstakingly assembled laboratory experiment.

PIGGY Like *Eighth Grade* meets *Carrie*, *Piggy* is a bold, brilliant and brutal black comedy about the horror of being a teenage girl. A lonely misfit in a small town in rural Spain, Sara is relentlessly bullied by her peers for her weight and hides away in her parents’ butcher shop, entranced by scrolling through Instagram. On a visit to the town pool, she’s almost drowned by her tormentors but forms a mysterious bond with Richard Holmes – billed simply as *el desconocido*, “the unknown” – who observes her tribulations and, as it turns out, has a talent for butchery himself.

In the wake of Julia Ducournau’s *Raw* and *Titane* and Hanna Bergholm’s *Hatching*, feminist teenage body-image horror is clearly a genre whose time has come. But Pereda’s debut, adapted from her own prize-winning short, is distinctively assured and stylish, as concerned with psychological penetration as it is with the mechanics of meatgrinders. In Laura Galán, fantastic as shy girl turned unwitting angel of death, she has unearthed a star who deserves to become as iconic as Sissy Spacek.

ALCARRÀS Carla Simón’s 2018 debut, *Summer 1993*, was a lyrical, moving memoir of a child uprooted from the city to the wilds of rural Catalonia. In *Alcarràs* she returns to this landscape but takes a wider view, exploring a community of Catalan peach farmers whose orchards and livelihoods are threatened by the encroachment of solar farms.

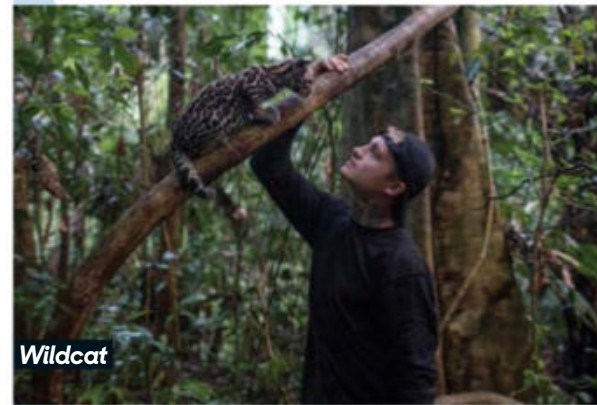
It’s another beautiful, passionate film, featuring non-professional actors delivering bittersweet neorealist tableaux of imperilled pastoral life. Simon is too thoughtful and subtle a filmmaker to give herself up to a little guy vs big agribusiness moral drama, but consequently *Alcarràs* feels episodic and lacks the strong point of view of her debut. A gang of semi-feral kids scamper through the fringes of the scenes, oblivious to the turmoil of their parents, making an adventure playground from the diggers about to destroy the landscape of their childhoods – and it’s possible a film from their perspective might have been a more engaging way into the drama that surrounds them. **U**

STEPHEN TROUSSÉ

ALSO OUT...

AVATAR: THE WAY OF WATER RELEASED DECEMBER 16

In the first of what are promised to be a further three much-delayed sequels, James Cameron returns to Pandora to find Jake Sully and the Na’avi defending their homes from a terrifying new threat.



Wildcat

WILDCAT RELEASED DECEMBER 23

Unexpectedly moving story of a young US army veteran who finds relief from PTSD by travelling to an Amazonian wildlife rescue centre, where he’s entrusted with an orphaned baby ocelot.

THE PALE BLUE EYE RELEASED DECEMBER 23

Christian Bale and Gillian Anderson star in a murder mystery set in 19th-century New York, featuring a youthful Edgar Allan Poe.

I WANNA DANCE WITH SOMEBODY RELEASED DECEMBER 26

Naomie Ackie stars in this Whitney Houston biopic directed by *Harriet*’s Kasi Lemmons. Stanley Tucci plays Clive Davis and Ashton Sanders is Bobby Brown.

THE ENFORCER RELEASED JANUARY 6

Antonio Banderas and Kate Bosworth star in this cheap and cheerful Miami-based hitman-turned-hero crime caper.

A MAN CALLED OTTO RELEASED JANUARY 6

In an English language adaptation of a surprise 2015 Swedish hit, Tom Hanks stars as a grumpy sexagenarian who finds his repeated attempts to kill himself frustrated at every turn by his friends and neighbours.



Tom Hanks in *A Man Called Otto*



Scene and heard: The Strokes



Vocal presence: Karen O of Yeah Yeah Yeahs

MEET ME IN THE BATHROOM

CINEMAS

7/10

Shambolically charming documentary covers the rise and fall of early-noughties New York



FOR most of the '90s it felt like there was a new Seattle every few months: Portland, Chapel Hill, Austin, Glasgow, Bristol, even Cardiff, were each hailed in waves of press and A&R as the fleeting epicentre or capital city of indie rock'n'roll. But no-one ever called New York the new Seattle. Because really New York is where it all began – be it at Max's Kansas City or CBGBs – and fittingly, where it all seems to have ended.

Meet Me In The Bathroom, a new documentary by Dylan Southern and Will Lovelace, loosely based on Lizzy Goodman's 2017 oral history, tells a hazy, sketchy tale of the last days of indie rock in early-noughties New York, through the trajectories of The Strokes, Interpol, the Yeah Yeah Yeahs and LCD Soundsystem, from scuffling beginnings in anti-folk cafes and indie-dance parties, through sudden preposterous international fame, endless tours

and MTV showcases, and on, and on, into exhaustion, drugs and burnout.

It all begins grandly with Ed Begley reciting Whitman, rhapsodising about the streets of Manhattan – but that's as far as the context goes. Compared with similar stories about the Greenwich Village folk era, the Warhol/Velvets avant-pop flux, or Manhattan's mid-'70s melting pot, there's little sense of the complex socio-cultural crosstown traffic that led to the formation of the scene. Instead the city is presented as a tabula rasa, all boarded up clubs and empty venues.

The story is told haphazardly, half-assedly, as though emulating the lazy cool of those early Strokes EPs. Much of the scene-setting is shaky handycam home video courtesy of antifolk scenesters the Moldy Peaches, for whom self-documentation swiftly eclipsed their other talents. The voiceover, meanwhile, seems have to been spliced together from several zonked 3am transatlantic phone calls. There's a charm to all this, especially

if you were there, or thereabouts on the fringes of these early gigs, but if you're new to the story or looking for fresh revelations or insight into the specific magic of a record or a performance, you may be frustrated.

There are moments of wonder, though: the arrival of Nick Zinner – by far the most talented musician on the scene, conjuring entire orchestras from a single guitar; the blossoming of Karen O from terrified acoustic artist, earnestly strumming at some downtown café, into incendiary live performer; the transcendental awakening of James Murphy to dance music (after first clearing with his therapist that he was OK to take ecstasy); the still astonishing racket of The Rapture's "House Of Jealous Lovers"...

The fallout is all too familiar, though: Ryan Adams and Courtney Love turn up like bad pennies, bands fritter away their impetus in MTV showcases, celebrity parties and heroin binges. Rents rise in New York,

forcing even lifers like James Murphy to move to Brooklyn and beyond.

Twenty years on, it all feels like the last gasp of the 20th century, before the 21st could begin in earnest. The charm of *Meet Me In The Bathroom* lies largely in the grain of the photography, the video, the crummy sound, the scuzzy bars and hotel rooms – a whole analogue world teetering on the cusp of the curated, algorithmic digital era. The film includes a brief tangent on the rise of Napster, with Interpol's singer Paul Banks forlornly recalling the moment when their second album leaked ahead of its release, scuppering their ardent dreams of multi-platinum world domination. He puts a brave face on it: "Our music reached so many people!" But ultimately it was the internet – coupled, not coincidentally, with rampant gentrification – that made geography history, and marked the end of these city scenes, slowly coalescing like coral reefs around shared record shops, bars, galleries and venues.

In the absence of any conclusive death or demise to mark the end of the story – so many of these bands are still touring and releasing records today – the film fizzles out, characteristically, with more Whitman: "*Give me such shows, give me the streets of Manhattan!/ Give me Broadway, with the soldiers marching, give me the sound of the trumpets and drums!*" It evokes a city that now feels as mythic, distant and long departed as Atlantis or Troy. It might have more aptly concluded: is this it? **STEPHEN TROUSSE**



Gotham rock: Interpol in 2002

BOOKS

“I’m starting all over again and working upwards,” beamed Paul McCartney optimistically, midway through a ramshackle 1972 European tour which saw his new band Wings stagger from gig to gig aboard a converted double-decker bus. “It’s like boxing, you don’t fight Cassius Clay your first time out.”

Getting back into fighting shape was something of a struggle for McCartney in the years following The Beatles’ split, with Allan Kozinn and Adrian Sinclair’s impossibly deep dive **The McCartney Legacy: Volume 1 – 1969–73** relaying his attempts at self-redemption in unprecedented detail. Desperately unhappy at the turn of the decade (“You don’t shave, and it’s not to grow a groovy beard, it’s because you can’t be fucking bothered,” he recalled), his first attempts at solo recording, *McCartney* and *Ram*, received a lukewarm reception. In a notorious 1971 *Rolling Stone* hit job, John Lennon likened his old songwriting partner to crooner Engelbert Humperdinck; contemporary critics didn’t see much value in his solo work either, *NME*’s Charles Shaar Murray summing up the mood of the time when he said 1973’s “My Love” was “as wimpy as anything you’d expect from Des O’Connor”.

However, if his music seemed unnecessarily bland, *The McCartney Legacy* shows that Fab Macca was anything but meek in person, controversial Beatles business manager Allen Klein receiving a notable poison telegram after what the singer felt were spiteful delays to the release of Wings’ 1971 debut *Wild Life*. “Dear Pig,” he wrote, “You have nothing to do with my affairs, so keep out of them! Fuck off. PM.”

McCartney’s attempts at rebooting his career certainly skewed eccentric. His wife Linda’s conscription into Wings brought widespread derision (Mick Jagger quipped disdainfully that he “wouldn’t let his old lady in the band”), while heading to Lagos to record *Band On The Run* was a mad enough expedition even before local hero Fela Kuti rounded on McCartney and accused him of “trying to steal the Black African’s music”.

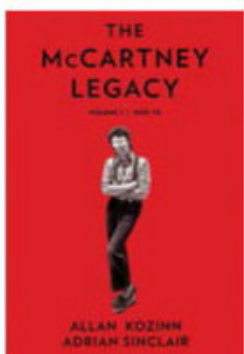
However, what emerges amid the drug busts and business feuds superbly documented in *The McCartney Legacy* is the singer’s determination not to be overshadowed by The Beatles. “My only plan is to grow up,” he wrote in the press biography that accompanied his first LP. On the ropes, but not about to throw in the towel.

AS he gurned through the early 1990s, shaking his maracas in the Happy Mondays, Bez seemed an unlikely candidate for national treasure status. But *Celebrity Big Brother* and *MasterChef* have



Winging it: Paul and Linda in Spain with Denny Laine, 1972

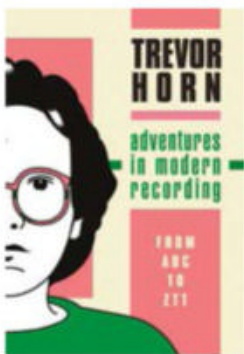
REVIEWED THIS MONTH



THE McARTNEY LEGACY: VOLUME 1 1969–73
ALLAN KOZINN AND ADRIAN SINCLAIR
DEY STREET, £30
9/10



BUZZIN': THE NINE LIVES OF A HAPPY MONDAY
BEZ
WHITERABBIT, £20
7/10



ADVENTURES IN MODERN RECORDING
TREVOR HORN
NINE-EIGHT, £22
8/10

provided a curious path into British living rooms for Mark Berry.

Bez’s second crack at an autobiography (following 2000’s *Freaky Dancin’*), **Buzzin’** shows the copper’s-son-turned-drug-dealer-turned-baggy-icon embracing something like maturity. Now a keen beekeeper with an interest in permaculture, he says he wrote this volume for his children and grandchildren “almost as a guide to what not to do”. However, if his adventures have taken him to some dark places (not least a near-fatal motorbike crash in 1999), *Buzzin’* tells a very 21st-century success story.

It shows that Fab Macca was anything but meek in person

By his own admission “a blagger and a chancer”, Bez was an unsuccessful career criminal when he was invited on stage by Mondays singer Shaun Ryder, serving as the band’s master of ceremonies as they cemented their reputation as a “drug-taking, one-of-the-boys, off-our-heads, up-for-the-party bunch of lads”. Bad habits and bad decisions stymied their career, Bez complaining that “every cunt robbed from us and that’s why none of us became millionaires”.

However, *Buzzin’* demonstrates his survival instincts, he and Ryder subtly morphing into media personalities in recent years, their regular spots on TV’s

Gogglebox as lucrative as their musical work. “It’s like a sexless marriage between him and me,” Ryder writes in one of his occasional inserts into *Buzzin’*. “He probably wants more out of it. I don’t.” Cynical, disreputable and almost cuddly despite themselves.

THRUST into the prog limelight when he and his Buggles collaborator Geoff Downes were drafted in to replace Jon Anderson and Rick Wakeman in Yes, the ever-resourceful Trevor Horn discovered a new string to his bow as he was compelled to hack together the lyrics for their 1980 LP, *Drama*. “I developed a really good system for doing it,” he writes in **Adventures In Modern Recording**. “I smoked a load of pot and then wrote down the first thing that came into my head.”

A musical upbringing as a bass player in dance bands (his earliest credits include charity shop regulars like Ray McVay’s *Big Party Hits*) gave County Durham-born Horn a superb ear for the mechanics of music making. However, global success with Buggles’ 1979 smash “Video Killed The Radio Star” (and his subsequent brief spell with Yes) persuaded him that he would be happier as “a Gollum-like creature of the studio”.

His memoir talks through some favourite productions in giddy detail, Horn as enthused by his work on Dollar’s “Hand Held In Black And White” and t.A.T.u.’s “All The Things She Said” as he is by the making of high-gloss classics like ABC’s *The Lexicon Of Love* and Grace Jones’ “Slave To The Rhythm” or his run of No 1s with Frankie Goes To Hollywood. Artificial music, but *Adventures In Modern Recording* delights in underlining the immense intelligence that lies behind it. 🎧

JIM WIRTH

Not Fade Away

Fondly remembered this month...



Man on the Tele:
live with Dr
Feelgood, LA,
March 23, 1976

WILKO JOHNSON

**Fiery Feelgoods guitarist
(1947–2022)**

WILKO Johnson was resurrected several times in his later years. In 2009, Julien Temple's Dr Feelgood documentary *Oil City*

Confidential rescued the band's guitarist from career oblivion, reminding viewers of his electric-shock stage presence and poetic mind. Ironically, a terminal cancer diagnosis in 2013 would raise his career to even greater heights, as people began to realise what might be lost. "I could contrive to feel miserable in the Garden of Eden," he later reflected. "Whereas, the valley of the shadow of death – it's not all downside!"

An album with Roger Daltrey, *Going Back Home*, hit the Top 3, and a farewell tour concluded with the balconies of Camden's KOKO bouncing with communal love. One second opinion and tumour-removing op later and the dead man walked. "We have remarked many times, my chums and I," Johnson mused, "that if you wrote the story of that year down, it would be condemned as an improbable fiction."

This was the strange sequel to Johnson's landmark musical achievement as Dr Feelgood's songwriter and guitarist. He and singer Lee

Brilleaux rooted the band in a mythic version of their refinery-lit Essex home, Canvey Island. Johnson's songs were steeped in Canvey mystique and rough romance, the likes of "Down By The Jetty" giving specific poetry to the Feelgoods' hardcore R&B. "I made a conscious effort," he acknowledged, "to reflect and dramatise the landscape here."

The Feelgoods played some of the most incendiary gigs of the '70s, often in the pressurised confines of the hostelrys that gave the pub-rock scene its name. Wilko vied with Brilleaux for maximum intensity, his manic stare boring a hole in the crowd, his Telecaster pointed at them like a tommy gun, looking ready to take a bullet or fire one for his singer. "It was so strong," he recalled. "You couldn't let it go slack for a

**His guitar style
was a crucial
influence on
the punk scene**

moment, because of this guy next to you."

Down By The Jetty (1974), *Malpractice* (1975), and the chart-topping, truly live *Stupidity* (1976) were recorded in near mono, the sound sharply high-contrast at Wilko's insistence. His guitar style, chopping out both riffs and rhythm, was a crucial influence on the London punk scene – and in New York, where Blondie's Clem Burke played *Down By The Jetty* on repeat to the CBGB crowd. During the recording of *Sneakin' Suspicion* (1977), though, rifts grew, climaxing in a row over a rare confessional song, "Paradise". Wilko was out. "We cocked it up at exactly the right moment – blew it all to pieces," he sighed, looking back.

"Dr Dupree", by Johnson's post-Feelgoods band Solid Senders, showed a more fantastical, enigmatic side to his songwriting, otherwise unexplored. A miserable time working on Ian Dury & The Blockheads' *Laughter* (1980) was followed by hard-gigging decades leading the Wilko Johnson Band. The 2004 death of his wife Irene suffused subsequent years with melancholy. Then came that miraculous return to the spotlight.

During his remaining time, Wilko took up songwriting again on a final album, *Blow Your Mind* (2018). It was a wired, heroic musician's life. "You are in a fantasy," he once explained of his time on stage. "And you have come from this demi-world of blazing oil stacks, and this really is an AK-47, it's not a Telecaster. In that world, for a little moment, you can even escape from death."

NICK HASTED

Obituaries

NIK TURNER

Hawkwind's Mighty Thunder Rider (1940–2022)

NIK Turner never much cared for musical perfection. As the free-blowing saxophonist in Hawkwind – with whom he also sang, composed and played flute – he helped define the wild aesthetic of their voyaging space rock, his squalling distortion central to the band's pursuit of chaos, noise and rhythm. "I don't have any illusions about my technical ability," he told *Sounds* in 1971. "I tend to use it as an electronic medium rather than an instrument."

If Dave Brock was Hawkwind's guiding pragmatist, then Turner was its untamed spirit. He was a formidable stage presence, a rangy figure in silver face cake and DIY spacewear, as animated as the music raging around him. He and Brock had first met in the Dutch city of Haarlem in 1967, when both aspiring musicians had been busking around Europe, picking up odd jobs on the way.

Co-founding Hawkwind two years later, Turner was pivotal in their emergence as what he called "the people's band", becoming mainstays of the free festival scene and immersing themselves

in various community projects. "Hawkwind in those days was almost an anti-band, we had no interest in stardom," Turner told *Uncut* in 2013. "We just enjoyed playing."

Turner's key songwriting contributions over Hawkwind's first six studio albums included "Master Of The Universe" and "Brainstorm". But he was ousted in late 1976, supposedly for refusing to rein in his more wayward tendencies on stage. He returned in 1982, only to be expelled again a couple of years later after further tensions with Brock. In between, Turner undertook a number of leftfield endeavours, chiefly 1978's *Xitintoday* album, centred around flute music that he'd played inside the Great Pyramid of Giza; and the formation of post-psychedelic ensemble, Inner City Unit.

He maintained an astonishing workrate throughout the years, be it fronting the likes of Space Ritual and Nik Turner's Fantastic All Stars, recording with everyone from Psychic TV and Michael Moorcock to William Shatner and Youth, or collaborating with Robby Krieger and Billy Cobham. As he recently explained to *Psychedelic Baby*: "I just try to make my life as full as possible, spread lots of love and give what I can."

Silver machine:
Nik Turner at the
Isle Of Wight
Festival, August
26, 1970



DH PELIGRO *Dead Kennedys beatkeeper* (1959–2022)

Darren Henley aka DH Peligro, took over as Dead Kennedys' drummer in early 1981, his hard-hitting style helping power albums like *Plastic Surgery Disasters* and *Frankenchrist*. In 1988, two years after the band's split, Peligro joined the Red Hot Chili Peppers; he co-wrote two songs for *Mother's Milk*, but was fired before recording sessions began. He reunited with Dead Kennedys in 2001.

TYRONE DOWNIE *Wailers organist* (1956–2022)

Formerly a member of the Impact All Stars, Jamaican keyboardist Tyrone Downie joined Bob Marley And The Wailers for 1976's *Rastaman Vibration*, remaining with the band until Marley's death in 1981. His CV also included Burning Spear, Tom Tom Club, Ian Dury, Sly & Robbie and Youssou N'Dour. In 2010, Grace Jones revealed that Downie was the subject of "My Jamaican Guy".

DAN McCAFFERTY *Nazareth frontman* (1946–2022)

Inspired by the likes of Little Richard and Chuck Berry, singer Dan McCafferty formed hard rockers Nazareth in his native Dunfermline in 1968. Third album *Razamanaz* (1973), featuring McCafferty co-writes "Bad Bad Boy" and "Broken Down Angel", proved to be their breakthrough, while 1975's *Hair Of The Dog* established them in America. A major influence on Axl Rose, McCafferty quit Nazareth in 2014 owing to ill health.

RAB NOAKES *Scottish singer-songwriter* (1947–2022)

Rab Noakes debuted with 1970's *Do You See The Lights?*, after which he recorded with Gerry Rafferty, who invited him into an early lineup of Steamwheel. Noakes went on to release dozens of LPs under his own name, as well as becoming senior producer for music on BBC Radio Scotland and performing regularly at Glasgow's Celtic Connections.

GARRY ROBERTS *Boomtown Rats guitarist* (1950–2022)

Lead guitarist Garry Roberts and keyboard player Johnnie Fingers founded The Boomtown Rats in Dun Laoghaire in 1975, recruiting other members, including frontman Bob Geldof, soon after. A crucial component of the band's glory years, Roberts became a touring sound engineer after their split in 1986 and also played with Rats drummer Simon Crowe in The Fab Four and The Velcro Flies.

GENE CIPRIANO *Wrecking Crew stalwart* (1928–2022)

Woodwind player and saxophonist Gene Cipriano played with Tommy Dorsey in the early '50s, before working with frequent collaborator Henry Mancini on the *Peter Gunn* series. As a member of LA's Wrecking Crew, Cipriano recorded with Harry Nilsson, The Beach Boys, Barbra Streisand, Randy Newman, The Monkees, Neil Diamond and many more.

GREGG PHILBIN *REO Speedwagon man* (1947–2022)

Bassist Gregg Philbin replaced Mike Blair in REO Speedwagon in 1968. He played on the band's first six studio albums, plus 1977's in-concert breakthrough, *Live: You Get What You Play For*. Philbin quit soon after its release, his virtuoso tendencies – "He played the bass as more of a lead instrument," remarked frontman Kevin Cronin – seemingly at odds with the band's more compact style.

PATRICK HAGGERTY *Gay country trailblazer* (1944–2022)

Already a prominent campaigner for gay rights in his adopted home of Seattle, Patrick Haggerty co-founded Lavender Country – generally considered to be the first openly gay country band in the US – in 1972. Signature song "Cryin' These Cocksucking Tears" appeared on their self-titled debut the following year. Having initially disbanded in 1976, Haggerty

GAL COSTA

Tropicália queen
(1945–2022)

WHEN Gilberto Gil and Caetano Veloso were exiled by Brazil's military dictatorship at the turn of the '70s, it was left to Gal Costa to keep their message of resistance alive. A remarkably emotive singer, capable of both luminous grace and burning intensity, Costa regularly performed their work back home, an act of defiance that consolidated her status as one of Brazil's most vital creative talents.

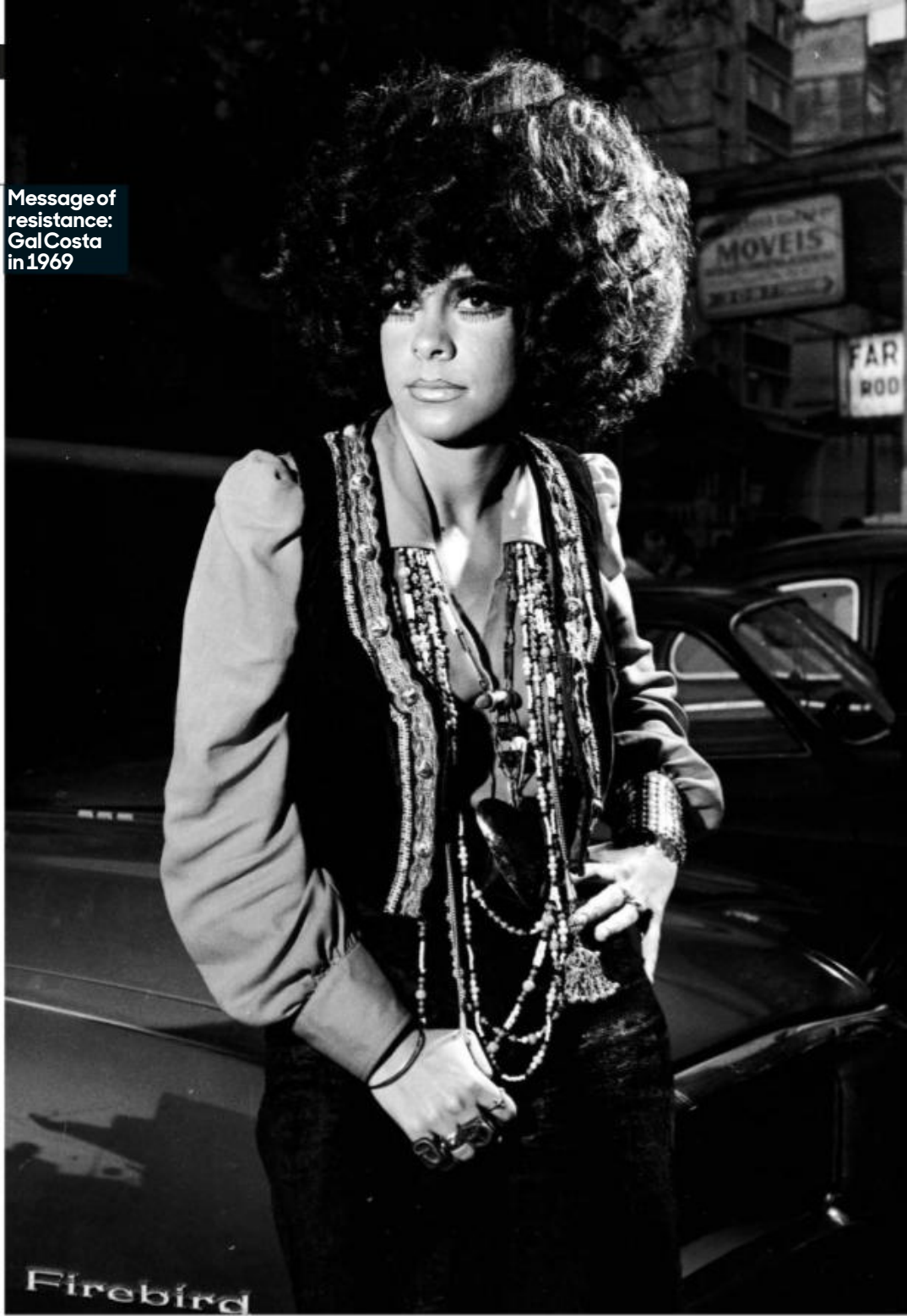
Costa was a leading figure of the tropicália counterculture, which sought to reshape traditional Brazilian pop by incorporating outsider rock, psychedelia and the avant-garde, reflecting a growing sense of dissent within the country. She appeared on 1968's *Tropicália: Ou Panis Et Circenses*, largely seen as a movement manifesto, alongside Gil, Veloso and Os Mutantes. Her rendition of Veloso's satirical ballad "Baby" became something of a signature song, reworked for the

following year's solo debut, *Gal Costa*. Now seen as a tropicália landmark, the album also included the explosive Gil-Veloso co-write "Divino, Maravilhoso".

Her subsequent career made a virtue of eclecticism, from 1971's R&B-flavoured *Legal* and 1973's more conceptual *India* (whose semi-naked sleeve was censored by the government) to the radio-ready *Água Viva* (1978) and 2011's experimental *Recanto*, written and produced by Veloso. Costa's final release, last year's *Nenhuma Dor*, brought her full circle: a newly recorded collection of duets that reconfigured some of her finest moments. Among her guests were Seu Jorge, Jorge Drexler, Rodrigo Amarante and Veloso's son, Zeca.

"There are many other aspects in which Brazilian music found itself enhanced by female voices," wrote Caetano Veloso in tribute. "But the emission of the voice in Gal was already music, independently of the conscious mastery of the notes. And that made her spirit express subtleties, thoughts, feelings, harshness, sweetness, in a spontaneous way."

Message of resistance: Gal Costa in 1969



revived Lavender Country for 2019's *Blackberry Rose*.

NORM CHAMBERS
Ambient voyager
(1972–2022)

Seattle-based composer and sound designer Norm Chambers recorded under the names Panabrite, Jürgen Müller and Spiral Index throughout his career, specialising in diverse ambient music from analogue instruments. In 2009 he issued *Paramount Hexagon*, the first of dozens of Panabrite albums, and later played in Soft Mirage and Water Bureau.

COLIN IRWIN
Music writer and presenter
(1951–2022)

Colin Irwin specialised in folk and world music, beginning at *Melody Maker* in 1974 and rising through the ranks to become assistant editor. After leaving the magazine in 1987, he later freelanced for magazines and national dailies, including *The Guardian* and *The Independent*, wrote acclaimed plays and biographies (of Neil Young, Leonard Cohen and Dire Straits among others) and presented music programmes on BBC Radio 2.

DANNY KALB
Blues guitarist
(1942–2022)

Danny Kalb forged his reputation as a skilled instrumentalist in Greenwich Village during the early '60s, performing live with Bob Dylan, appearing on albums by Phil Ochs and Judy Collins, and as a member of Dave Van Ronk's Ragtime Jug Stompers. In 1965 he co-founded the Blues Project, where his expressive and often soulful leads were a central feature of their first three albums.

ROBIN SYLVESTER
RatDog bassist
(1950–2022)

Inspired by Paul McCartney while working on 'The White Album' at Abbey Road, sound engineer Robin Sylvester began playing the bass guitar himself soon afterwards. He recorded with Byzantium and The Movies, before joining Bob Weir's Grateful Dead spin-off, RatDog, in 2003.

TAKEOFF
Migos rapper
(1994–2022)

Georgia hip-hop trio Migos, comprising Kirshnik Ball

(aka Takeoff) and his relatives Quavo and Offset, hit a commercial peak with 2016's "Bad And Boujee", from the platinum-selling *Culture*. Takeoff's most recent album was a collaboration with Quavo called *Only Built For Infinity Links*.

TONY ORTEGA
In-demand jazzier
(1928–2022)

Versatile saxophonist, flautist and clarinet player Tony Ortega was involved in various projects, from film soundtracks (*The Pawnbroker*, *Gloria*, *An Unmarried Woman*) to TV (*The Julie Andrews Show*, *The Redd Foxx Comedy Hour*) to session work for Frank Sinatra, Barbra Streisand and Frank Zappa.

DON LEWIS
LEO pioneer
(1941–2022)

Synth player, vocalist and electronics engineer Don Lewis worked with Quincy Jones, Michael Jackson and Sergio Mendez, but he was best known for his '70s invention the Live Electronic Orchestra (LEO), an integrated sound controller that predated MIDI by a decade.

JEFF COOK
Alabama co-founder
(1949–2022)

In 1972, multi-instrumentalist Jeff Cook and cousins Randy Owen and Teddy Gentry formed Wildcountry, later renamed Alabama. Aside from leading one of the biggest draws on the US country circuit, he also issued 10 solo albums and ran his own studio.

MICK GOODRICK
Jazz guitarist
(1945–2022)

Mick Goodrick recorded with Gary Burton and Charlie Haden, but was primarily known for teaching at the highly reputed Berklee College Of Music, where his pupils included Bill Frisell, Pat Metheny and John Scofield.

AARON CARTER
Former child star
(1987–2022)

Aaron Carter was just nine when he released his 1997 debut album, featuring major hits "Crush On You" and "Crazy Little Party Girl". By the early '00s he was a teen-pop superstar in the States, issuing platinum-sellers like *Aaron's Party (Come Get It)*. **ROB HUGHES**



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END-OF-YEAR LOW

I'm heartbroken at the news of Mimi Parker's passing. What a gorgeous voice and a wonderful person, just so freaking sad. Much love to Alan and the extended Parker/Sparhawk families... and anyone that was spellbound by her sound.

Robin J. Wodonga, Australia

We were also heartbroken by Mimi's passing, Robin. We hope Stephen Deusner's piece on page 82 is a suitable tribute to her and the incredible music she and Alan made. Incidentally, with the passing of artists like Keith Levene, Nik Turner, Wilko Johnson and Gal Costa, this month feels like a heavy way to end the year. Although it's scant consolation for their loved ones, I'm sure that many of us have been sent back deep into their respective catalogues, revisiting old favourites and perhaps discovering songs that we might have previously overlooked. [MB]

IT'S SO EASY TO DATE...

Two issues that struck me while scanning the Review Of The Year in your January 2023 edition.

1. Why place Wilco's *Cruel Country* CD at No 6 in your best bet releases of 2022 when the official release date is January 2023? Not available to purchase!

2. The Roxy Music gig review. It would have been nice to include the actual full band who played. Ferry, McKay and Manzanera are mentioned but who played on bass and keyboards, please? The



reviewer even namechecks the backing singers but no mention of who delivers the signature keyboard sounds. I'm sure Eno would want to know, too!

Paul McGee, via email

*Thanks for writing, Paul. *Cruel Country* was released digitally on May 27, so that counts as a 2022 release by our reckoning. Vinyl and CD are coming in January 2023, though.*

OMISSIONS IMPOSSIBLE

Congrats on another must-read end of year round-up. It's always exciting to see what everyone's chosen. As ever, though, we're all going to be beating our li'l puffed-up chests out here in readerland about what we feel was outrageously overlooked. So I'm going to quickly ruffle my own feathers in praise of the Tedeschi Trucks Band's hugely enjoyable *I Am The Moon* album(s), released in four parts over the summer, each under 40 utterly transportive, give-me-more minutes long and, individually and as a whole, magnificent. I've probably played them more than anything else this year.

I'm surprised *Uncut* have never got behind them and their always warm, progressive, spiritually questing, positive vibing, bubbling stew of Americana/blues/soul/roots/raga/jam band/jazz what else have you got? Never mind end-of-year poll listings, how about a full feature, at least? It's never too late.

Try the album(s). I'd put money on you liking 'em.

Have a great 2023!

Nick Black, via email

...Presumably someone on your team "accidentally deleted" Bonnie Light Horseman as Album Of The Year as no mention was made of

them in your Top 75? An easy mistake to make, of course. Please rectify.

Dr Andrew Webber, via email

I meant to ask last month, but do please send us in your own Best Of lists for 2022. I'll do my best to run some of them in upcoming issues.

LIP SERVICE

Reading the feature on the Flaming Lips in your December issue reminded me of the last time I was listening to the ELO double album *Out Of The Blue*, which has an instrumental track called "The Whale". Want to know where Wayne Coyne and co got the sound for *Yoshimi*...? It's right here!

Ed Robson, via email

MARK OF THE MAN

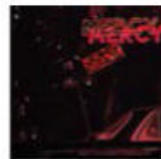
Reading the article in your December issue about the new *Sparklehorse* film reminded me of a gig Mark Linkous did back in the late 2000s, possibly at the Shepherd's Bush Empire. He was supported by a duo called the Dead Texans, who were members of his band on the evening. Anyway, he came onstage with a little box, possibly an old radio. He was having trouble getting it to work and started to get frustrated. Various crew came out and helped him fiddle with it





CROSSWORD

One vinyl copy of John Cale's double-album, *Mercy*



until eventually he was content to start, albeit a few minutes late. We were then treated to a slideshow of images of old clapboard houses, dusty roads, old cars, weather-beaten faces all projected onto a screen at the back of the stage as he performed a truly brilliant set of his mysterious and fragile songs. It still stands as one of the most beautiful things I have ever been to.

I also saw him at the Old Market in Hove not long afterwards and playing bass at the Indigo 2 for Daniel Johnston. Such a shame he isn't still with us I think he had a lot more going on in his head than we knew about.

Gary Howchen, via email

WHERE IS THE LOVE?

Why have you not reviewed the new House Of Love album? The band have a twisty, turny back story and this album is without Terry Bickers as he has (once again) left the band.

However, the album is really strong and Guy Chadwick has recruited a new set of musicians who do a great job of building a bluesy new future while on some tracks echoing the effects-laden sounds of the past.

I think it's a big miss of a still interesting band.

Ian Clay, via email

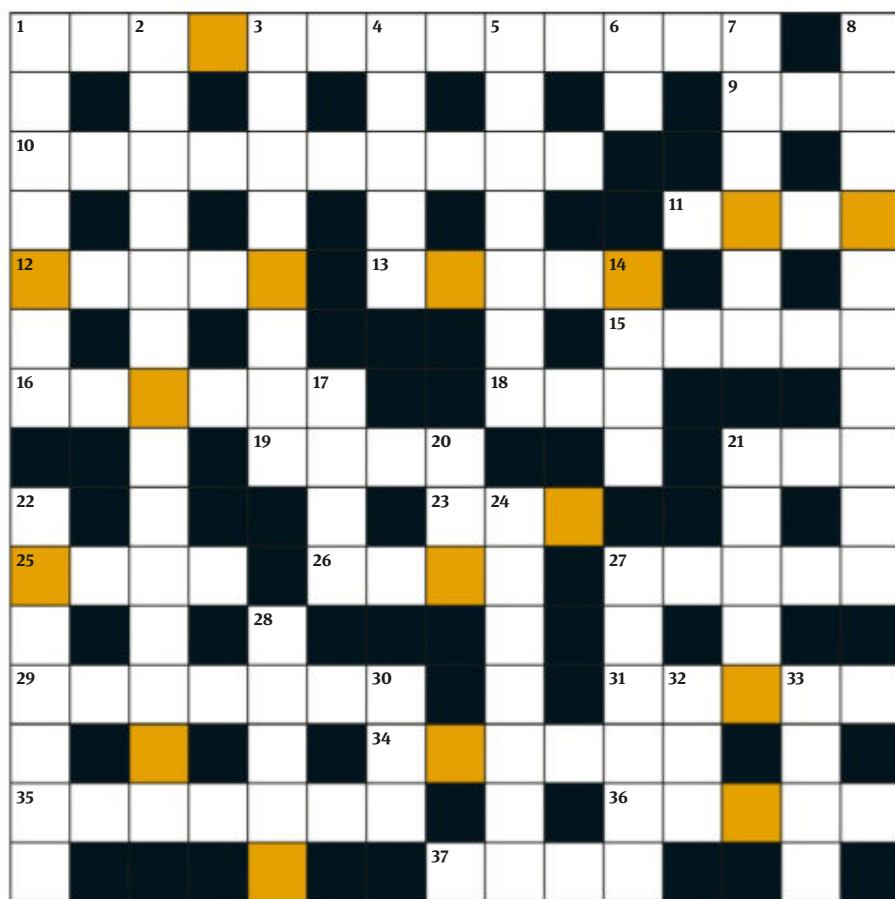
Yeah, an oversight on our part: apologies to anyone who might also have missed a review. We'll make sure it's covered next month.

BRUCE FORCE

Just a quick note to say well done for continuing to produce a great magazine. I particularly enjoyed the piece on Davy Graham – great stuff. It made me think of other 'cult' artists who deserve to be covered in the same way. You probably get fed up with readers asking you to write about their favourites, but I'd like to gently add Bruce Cockburn to your 'maybe' list. His 50-year career has produced 34 albums, with often socially conscious lyrics (sometimes in French!) covering issues including politics, the environment, the treatment of indigenous peoples and refugees.

But it's not all heavy, bleeding-heart storytelling. Just listen to "Wondering Where The Lions Are" or "Mama Wants To Barrelhouse All Night Long". I'd be surprised if they don't lift your day. His wonderful songs have been extensively covered and his lyrics have even been 'borrowed' by Bono. Anyway, I think there's an interesting story there which has not been told and I think you are just the folk to do it!

Derek Power, via email



HOW TO ENTER

The letters in the shaded squares form an anagram of a song by Neil Young. When you've worked out what it is, email your answer to: competitions@uncut.co.uk. The first correct entry picked at random will win a prize. Closing date: **Wednesday, January 11, 2023**. This competition is only open to European residents.

CLUES ACROSS

- 1 An Arcade Fire album please. That'll be all for the present (10-3)
9 (See 19 across)
10 Drags mat on somehow for Suede to perform album (3-3-4)
11 (See 4 down)
12 Sleepy John _____, US bluesman who influenced Robert Plant and John Lennon (5)
13 "I'm giving you a _____ call to tell you how I feel", London Grammar (5)
15 Pete _____, former man in The Loft who recently spent some *Time On Earth* (5)
16+22 D Buzzcocks going around and cutting a groove on their debut release (6-7)
18 Canadian alt. rockers who had a bit of talent (3)
19+9 A Leeds band on the short list for this year's Mercury Prize (4-3)
21 Group that came out of Glasvegas? (3)
23+3 D "All is quiet on _____/A world in white gets underway", 1983 (3-5-3)
25 Liam 'Skin' Tyson has been member of this band since 1994 (4)
26 "Close your eyes, have no _____", from John Lennon's "Beautiful Boy" (4)
27 (See 1 down)
29 Album with cover featuring Battersea Power Station (7)
31 The voice of Slade (5)
34 A hit for The Chi-Lites, covered by Paul Young (2-4)
35 Soho act reformed for album by The Band (7)
36 Bristol lads who awarded themselves a "Well Done" for debut single (5)
37 Shoegazers Bleach found a slight problem with this EP (4)

ANSWERS: TAKE 307

ACROSS

1+34 A Can't Get It Out Of My Head, 9+8 A Pete Townshend, 10 Healing Game, 14 Raw, 16 Hour, 17 Off The Bone, 20 Taste, 21 As, 23 Now It's On, 25

Ripped, 29 Banner, 30

Emily, 32 End, 33 Crass

DOWN

1 Catch The Wind, 2 New Values, 3 Gossip, 4+11 D The Gift, 5 Tad, 6 Them, 7+26 D Freda Payne, 12+15 D Astral Weeks, 13 Electricity, 14

CLUES DOWN

- 1+27 A No shortage of accommodation during the current experience of Rolling Blackouts Coastal Fever (7-5)
2 "_____ and when you touch down, you'll find that it's stranger than known", The Byrds (5-5-4)
3 (See 23 across)
4+11 A Change when it's on for a Rockin' Berries performance (3-2-4)
5 Without a heavenly body, Dido made her debut success (2-5)
6+7 D I'm stuck in here with Puff Daddy's Grammy Award-winning rap album (2-3-3)
8 Their final single in 2016 was a "Beautiful Thing" (5-5)
14 Wait anxiously for inclusion of a T.Rex album (4)
17 Johnny Thunders & The Heartbreakers album is part of the glam fashion (1-1-1-1)
20 And a comeback for Arto Lindsay's 'no wave' band (3)
21 Dolly mixture for lead singer of The Nightingales (5)
22 (See 16 across)
24 Ahmet _____, co-founder and president of Atlantic Records (7)
27 Celtic rock band from the Isle Of Skye whose signature song was "Loch Lomond" (6)
28 Heavy metal band whose albums include *Wheels Of Steel* and *Crusader* (5)
30 "It used to be so nice, it used to be so good", 1975 (3)
32 "Your _____ road is rapidly ageing", from Bob Dylan's "The Times They Are A-Changin'" (3)
33 "Loneliness is the cloak you wear, a _____ shade of blue", from The Walker Brothers' "The Sun Ain't Gonna Shine Anymore" (4)

Riot, 18 Deftones, 21 Ace,

22 Dogrel, 24+19 A What A Waster, 27 David, 28 Red,

31 EC

HIDDEN ANSWER: Dear Landlord

XWORD COMPILED BY: Trevor Hungerford

UNCUT

FEBRUARY 2023

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH: Henry Diltz

THANKS TO: Johnny Sharp, Lora Findlay

TEXT AND COVERS PRINTED BY Gibbons UK Ltd

PRODUCTION & OPERATIONS

PUBLISHING PRODUCTION MANAGER Craig Broadbridge

DISTRIBUTED BY Marketforce (UK) Ltd, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London E14 5HU

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A Caldecott Music Group Company

Uncut Magazine ISSN 1368-072 USPS 18588 is published monthly by NME Networks Media Limited, Griffin House, 135 High Street, Crawley, West Sussex, RH10 1DQ, United Kingdom.

Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named World Container INC 150-15, 183rd St, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA.

Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, NY 11256.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Uncut, Air Business Ltd, c/o World Container INC 150-15, 183rd St, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA.

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My Life In Music

Mike Scott

The Waterboys skipper on the records that forever float his boat: “I wanted to live in music”



BOB DYLAN

Blonde On Blonde COLUMBIA, 1966

The first song I ever remember being moved by was “Blowin’ In The Wind”. But it wasn’t Bob Dylan’s version, it was Val Doonican’s – I was about five or six years old and it was on the TV. I don’t know why it moved me, but I suppose that’s the power of poetry. I came to Bob a few years later when a student of my mother’s played me *Blonde On Blonde*. My favourite song was “Sad-Eyed Lady Of The Lowlands” – the sway of the rhythm, the romance of the organ, the buttoned-down emotion of the players that was so strong in Nashville music in the ’60s. As an 11-year-old I didn’t understand any of that, I just recognised something that touched me.



MARVIN GAYE

“I Heard It Through The Grapevine” MOTOWN, 1968

The other thing that really affected me as a kid was American soul music. On winter mornings I’d go to school on the bus with my transistor radio and I’d hear the Four Tops, The Temptations, Otis, Aretha... or Marvin doing “I Heard It Through The Grapevine”. I didn’t understand about sex or romantic love and emotion, but I got it from those voices. Before I fell in love with girls, I fell in love with records. I’d be trying to recapture the melody of the song in my mind, and I wouldn’t be able to breathe freely until I could hear it again. I wanted to live in music; I wanted to feel the feelings of the people who made those records.



THE ROLLING STONES

Get Yer Ya-Ya’s Out! DECCA, 1970

My Rolling Stones epiphany was seeing the video for “Jumpin’ Jack Flash” on *Top Of The Pops*. That’s rock’n’roll personified: it’s dangerous, it’s dark, the music is impossibly exciting. *Get Yer Ya-Ya’s Out!* is a magnificent live record from their greatest tour, the American tour of ’69. They never sounded as great again. It’s got the Chuck Berry numbers on it as well, “Little Queenie” and “Carol”. Like most of my generation, I got Chuck Berry secondhand from The Beatles and the Stones. So I picked this album, not just because it informed my sense of what live rock’n’roll should sound like, but also because it brought those Chuck Berry songs to me.



THE VELVET UNDERGROUND & NICO

The Velvet Underground & Nico VERVE, 1967

I had a girlfriend called Angela, and her dad had this weird-looking double album. It was a compilation on MGM, and that was my introduction to the Velvets. My favourite song on their first album was “Heroin”. I’ve never taken heroin, so I can’t say whether it’s an accurate representation of the experience. But, my God, it’s an exciting record. Everything about the glory of a two-chord song is in “Heroin”. Instead of using musical variation, it rests on dynamics and tempo fluctuations and the magnificence of Lou Reed’s lyric. It’s romantic and dramatic and inscrutable and beautiful. That one song was a great education for me.



PATTI SMITH

“Hey Joe”/“Piss Factory” MER, 1974

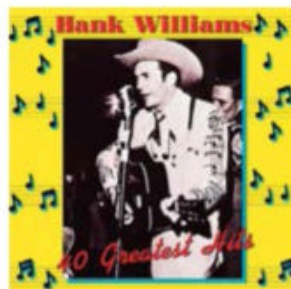
She’s made a lot of great records but “Hey Joe” / “Piss Factory” stands to me as her towering achievement. Like “Heroin”, it’s primal and rough but it has this incredible beauty about it. She wasn’t a tuneful, melodious singer but she had so much feeling – an untutored rawness that went straight to the listener’s emotions. Richard Sohl was, I think, the crucial instrumentalist in her group. On “Piss Factory” he takes us off on this magnificent jazz flight with his piano while Patti’s reciting this brilliant poem about how she’s fed up in this dead-end job and what it means to her to escape from it and be her own individual self. I still think it’s the greatest record she ever made, and a huge inspiration to me.



BROTHER WILLIAMS MEMPHIS SANCTIFIED SINGERS

“I Will Meet You At The Station” VOCALION, 1930

Very few recordings of them exist, but I found this song on a compilation called *Whole World In His Hands* in the mid-’80s. This was at a time when I was really bored with rock music and I was trying to delve deeper into the roots of vocal music to find something more real. That led me back to country & western and blues and Cajun music and gospel. I was no follower of Jesus, but really authentic gospel transcends the religion and reaches a level of spirituality that anyone can enjoy. I took this song, rearranged it, and used to sing it with The Waterboys – it became a staple of our set.



HANK WILLIAMS

40 Greatest Hits MERCURY, 1978

I’d heard about Hank through Dylan and Patti Smith talking about him, and I’d known some of his songs forever without realising who’d sung them. So I bought this double album and they were all on there. This was another magnificent education because they all used three or four chords and they were dead easy to play – several found their way into The Waterboys’ repertoire. I learned so much about the economy of songwriting from Hank. There’s a reason they call him the “Hillbilly Shakespeare”, because of the depth in his lyrics. A lot of people would think “Your Cheatin’ Heart” is a corny song, but if you scrutinise the lyrics, it’s very serious. There’s a lot of wisdom disguised in Hank’s delivery.



TAYLOR SWIFT

Evermore REPUBLIC, 2020

I bought this for my daughter last year. She’s nine years old, and we’ve listened to this album and its predecessor *Folklore* a great deal. I already respected Taylor, but the depth of her Americana-based music on *Evermore* is profound – and her melodies are beautiful, her lyrics are powerful and her delivery is exquisite. She chooses great collaborators: Jack Antonoff, Bon Iver, and The National on that amazing song “Coney Island”. It’s a masterclass in contemporary songwriting, and there’s so much feeling in her music. My very favourite song is “Marjorie”, about her deceased grandmother. An incredibly powerful song, beautifully structured and beautifully produced. 🎧

Mike Scott performs at the UK Americana Awards 2023 at Hackney Empire on January 26, alongside fellow Lifetime Achievement Award winner Judy Collins. More details and tickets at theamauk.org



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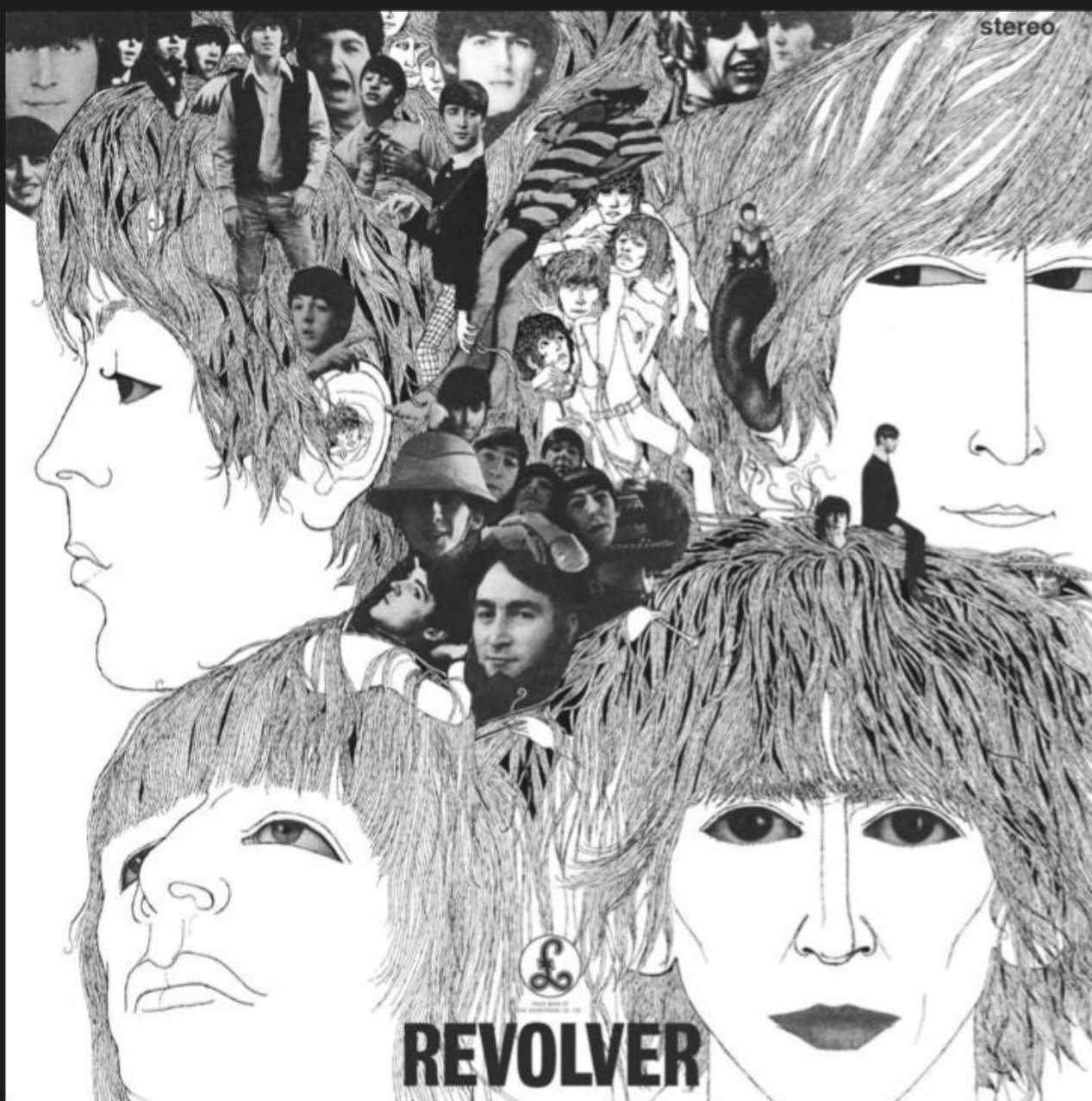
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